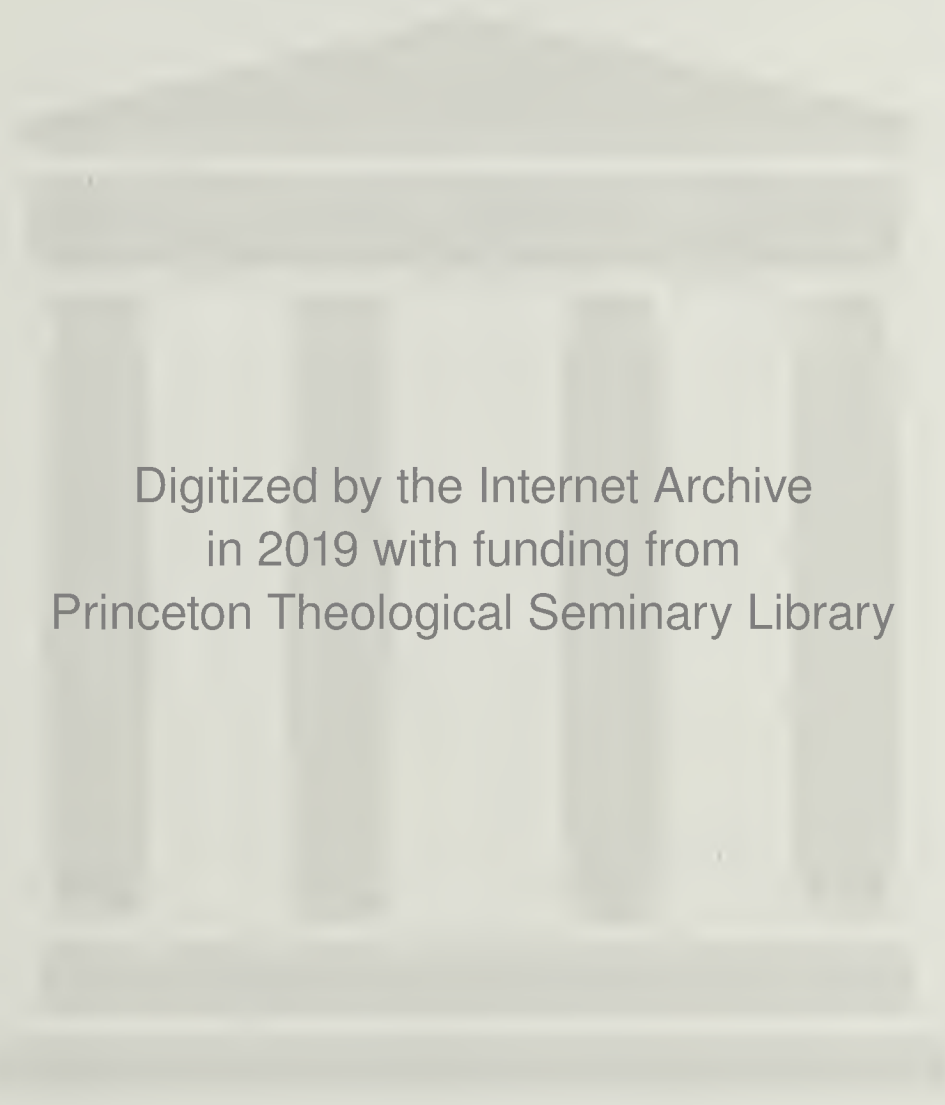




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The son of man



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THE SON OF MAN :

Discourses

ON THE

HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

✓
BY

FRANK COULIN, D.D.,

Minister of the National Church of Geneva.

Translated with the sanction of the Author.

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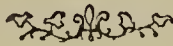
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



IT has been said, that “the secret of oratory lies not in saying new things, but in saying things with a certain power that moves the hearers;” and by another writer, “that that preacher will do well, who, by new combinations, or a happy style of illustration, shall cause men to look upon old truths with a new interest.” It has been thought that the writer of these Discourses has, in an eminent degree, attained this power, and has succeeded in giving a new interest to old truths. No apology, therefore, is required for offering them to English readers, for whom they are no less adapted than for his hearers at Paris and Geneva.

It is by the special desire of the Author that the Address on the Teaching of Jesus Christ accompanies the other Discourses. It was delivered at the opening of the Salle de la Réformation, at Geneva, in September, 1867.

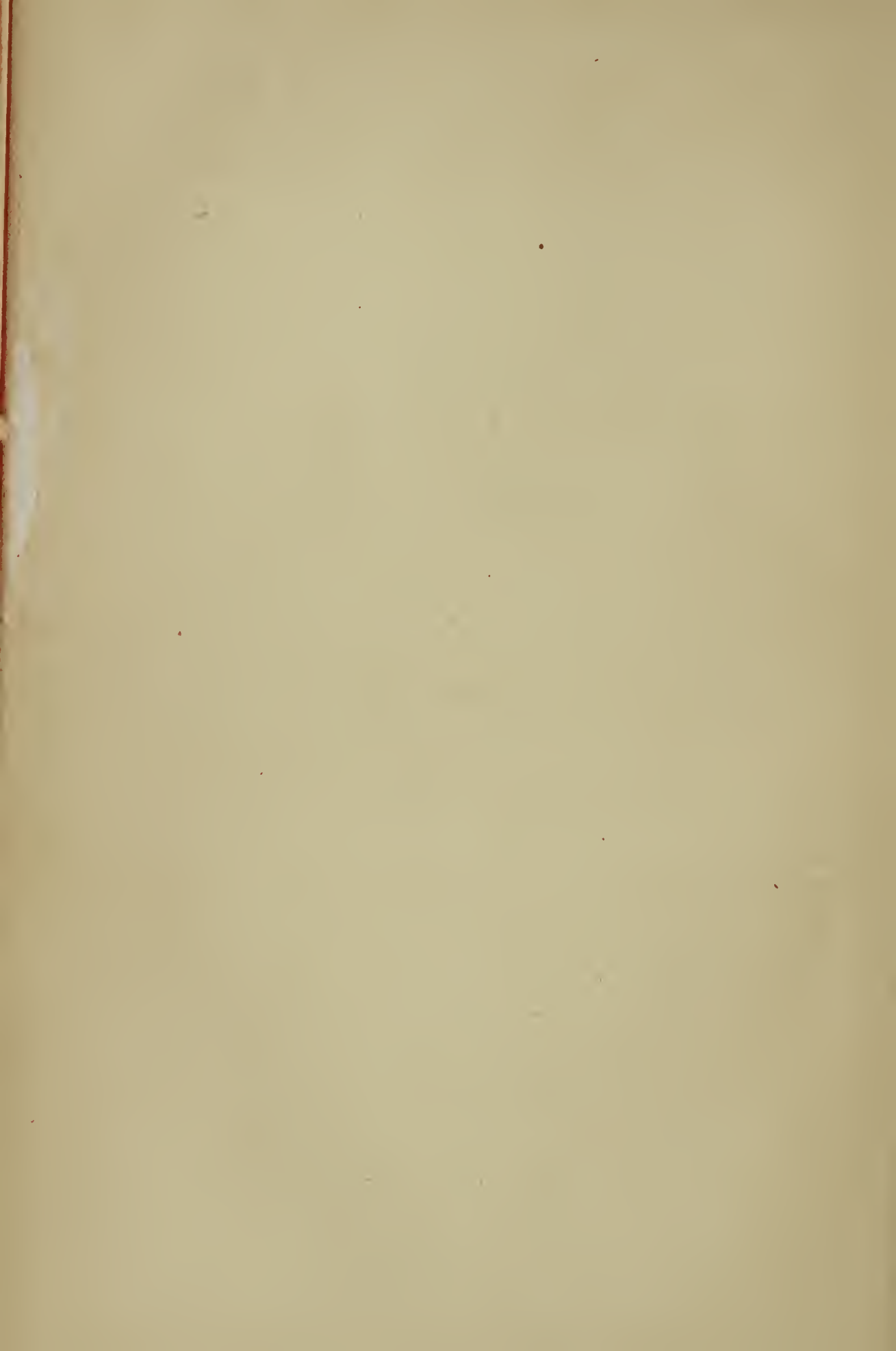
JANE STURGE.

NORTHFLEET, *March*, 1869.

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THE SON OF MAN.



I.

Jesus of Nazareth.

“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—*Luke* xix. 10.

“**I** AM that which has been, and which is, and which is to be, and my veil no mortal hath yet drawn aside.” This is the inscription which ancient Egypt had engraved on the pediment of one of its most famous temples to describe the Divinity. It testifies at once to the universal desire of man to seek an unknown God, and the mysterious silence which awaits him when left

to his own powers in the search. "Who is He then?" has been asked in turn by all nations; "who is then this almighty and invisible Being, of whose glory the heavens speak, who fills all space with His presence, who makes the universe His temple, from whom all things proceed, to whom they all return, who is, who has been, who will be?" He asserts His existence, He awes us, He has sanctuaries built for Him everywhere; but His face is mystery, and no mortal has yet been able to draw aside His veil.

My brethren, eighteen centuries ago there appeared a mortal who affirmed that He had drawn aside this veil for ever; who even declared that He presented the likeness of the invisible God in His own person to those who contemplate Him. A Son of Man once dared to say to His fellow-creatures: "No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son;"* and to add, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."† This pretention of Jesus of Nazareth is unique in history, and it is

* Luke x. 22.

† John xiv. 9.

assuredly awful, if not founded in truth. He stated it without reserve, and in all its enormity, first to the disciples, then in presence of the people, then before the rulers, then before the world. He maintained it without flinching during all the vicissitudes of a life ended by the greatest sufferings; and, on quitting the world, He left to the human race panting in the pursuit of the true God, as a unique and definite article of faith: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."* It is true that this pretention recalls and pre-supposes another still more extraordinary. He was, He said Himself, in the beginning with God, in the bosom of God, the only Son of God, and only became man for the precise purpose of removing every veil from the eyes of man, and of showing him the face of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we

* John iii. 36.

beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Thus does one of the historians of His life express himself, the most intimate confidant of His thoughts and of His teaching.

A complete study of the person of Jesus Christ, would perhaps require the establishment of this pre-existence, and the evidence of this divine and supernatural character before everything else.

My design, however, is not to attempt the demonstration of this. Need I say that I consider the point to be established, and I make no secret of my conviction. But I wish to place myself with you on the level of those who do not share it, and I propose to speak to you in these discourses as of a man, the Son of Man.

I shall go forth to meet Him on the high road of history. I shall take His name as I find it in the annals of the human race in the genealogical tree of our common family. If He has a more noble parentage, so much the better! The light of it

* John i. 1, 2, 4, 14.

will be reflected upon us. I shall not clasp His hand less warmly when I call Him my brother.

Do not imagine that I am embarrassed by confining myself to this special point of view. Quite the contrary; for if Christian doctrine is founded upon the person of Jesus Christ, you will observe that it implies two things, of which there is, in my opinion, equal proof. The first is His real and evident humanity, the second that this humanity is stamped with such a seal that it is impossible not to go higher in order to explain it. Even the title that He gave Himself, and which we have inscribed upon our banner because it always endears Him to us, this title of the Son of Man, if it does not designate a man, is nothing but a lie; and if it designates only a man, who is not recommended by anything particular to the special attention of other men, it is a vain and foolish title.

The Son of Man; He is unique among men, although really and fundamentally a man. I take, then, this perfect humanity of Jesus Christ as a

starting point, and in exhibiting the exceptional character of it, my aim will be to conduct you to the conclusion proclaimed in the Gospels, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."*

This is the course we shall pursue. We will begin by taking a general view of the historical personage, the study of whom I submit for your consideration. We will observe the man, His plan, His method. This will be the subject of the first discourse.

If well conceived, it will lead us to demand the moral perfection of one who presents Himself on the theatre of the world with a programme like that of Jesus of Nazareth. We shall see in the second discourse whether He complies with that condition.

In a world in which sin and suffering reign, perfect holiness could only sustain itself with respect to sin on condition of bearing the weight of suffering in all its intensity. It is in suffering

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

and by suffering that it receives and renders its highest testimony.

The immolation of the Holy One and the Just, His voluntary descent into the abyss of grief, of death and malediction, will be our third subject of discourse.

The history of the Son of Man then arrives at the culminating point of interest. An absolute struggle takes place, a thrilling question arises. Which shall be the victor? The power of sin by the triumph of death, or the power of life by the triumph of the Holy Victim? It is a question of fact which will oblige us to examine closely the chief event of the Gospel history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the key-stone of the arch. I tell you so beforehand. Then, in a final discourse, we shall see presented the title, or rather the fact of a true royalty, arising from the character of the Son of Man, and from His triumphant manifestation in the bosom of humanity, in other words, from all the travail of His soul, such as it will have been disclosed to

us; a royalty which will establish its seat in our consciences and in our souls, and after having gathered the Church together upon earth, will judge the world in eternity.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One and the Just, the Man of Sorrows, the Risen One, the King; it is a drama in which everything is united by a connecting link, and the *dénouement* of which relates to nothing less than the destinies of humanity according to God's plan, who gave His only Son unto the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

You will certainly agree with me that such a subject recommends itself to us by its sublimity as well as by its practical character. I approach it with trembling, fearing the compromising contact of my infirmity for the solid foundations of our faith. Nevertheless, I approach it with joy.

To speak of Thee, of Thee only, O Jesus, my beloved Master, and to follow the path which

* John iii. 16.

Thou hast Thyself chosen of manifesting Thy glory beneath the mantle of Thy humiliation, is it not enough to make a heart leap which loves Thee, and for which Thou hast done so much?

You will join in our efforts, my brethren, you will sustain us by earnest and sympathetic attention; but, above all, we will together ask for the help of that Spirit of which the Son of Man said to His disciples: "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you."*

I have said, my brethren, that it is a drama with which we are concerned; perhaps I ought to begin by recalling the scene of it. In order to do this, you must picture to yourselves in turn, the ancient city of Bethlehem on the hills of Judah, the inn, the stable, then the little town of Nazareth, gracefully placed above the slopes of a green valley, with its eastern dwellings, and in the midst of them the house of the carpenter Joseph; then the shores of the lake of Tiberias, its towns and villages; then Jerusalem the Holy

* John xvi. 14.

City; on this venerable theatre, consecrated already by so many touching recollections, and now to be the scene of more touching events still, a life began similar in every respect to other lives. A little infant comes into the world, is wrapped in linen, and utters those cries by which new-born man proclaims his misery and his infirmity. The child grows, he has a mother, in whose heart the history lived, so many times repeated yet always new, of the first step, the first word, the first question, of those first rays of light which announce the dawn of intelligence, the beginning of reflection in the heaven of the soul.

Do not imagine, however, any greater prodigy than the prodigy of the development of all infancy. He to whom the beautiful name of Jesus, which signifies Saviour, was given from His birth, was subject to His parents and pleased them in all things. Do not hesitate to imagine Him on Mary's knees, hearing for the first time of the God of Abraham and the story of Israel, or in Joseph's workshop, learning to handle the tools.

of his trade. He probably lost Joseph at an early age, for in the early days of His ministry, when He came to preach in His own country, they said of Him: "Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?" "As of Him," says Bossuet, "whom they had seen keeping the shop, maintaining a widowed mother by His labours, and conducting the little business of a trade which supported them both."

We like to collect characteristic details of the childhood of great men, that we may trace the first indications of their superiority and the first pledges of their future glory. If but little has been preserved to us about the childhood of Jesus, is it not that it offered less than most for this sort of illustration, because it was so natural? However this may be, we must respect the obscurity in which the early years of Him are wrapped who was to enlighten the world, and we must start from the day when He quitted His retreat to manifest Himself to the world. One thing is clear, that His childhood and youth must have been

of perfect and transparent purity, for otherwise, His subsequent life would have been inexplicable. Every wound that affects the soul leaves a trace, a sear, for which you will search in vain in the soul of Him who could say with a clear conscience: The Prince of this world hath nothing in me!*

He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. This is all we know.

The Jesus whom we know in fact, we know from scarcely anything else than the three years of His public ministry, and yet, as has often been remarked, if there is in history a living and familiar figure, it is His. The evangelical biographies embrace but a very short space of time, comprised in a very few pages. But they have a merit, borrowed doubtless from their hero Himself, that of a marvellous and unsurpassable sincerity. I will not only say that they bear the stamp of being the testimony of eye-witnesses, but so vividly is He of whom they speak presented to us, at the distance

* John xiv. 30.

of eighteen centuries, that in reading them we almost imagine ourselves to be eye-witnesses. You go with Him from place to place; you mix in the crowd which surrounds Him; you follow His steps with His disciples; you acknowledge the force of His unexampled moral authority; you are touched by the blessings He confers; you are enlightened by His words; He transports you into and keeps you without effort in the region of the sublime; you cannot escape the conviction, that never was there a man above this man; but at the same time you receive an impression, that never was a man more entirely a stranger to anything of an assumed character, or who remained so spontaneously to the end what He was in Himself, and what the original gifts of His individuality made Him. Voluntarily or involuntarily all men act more or less; He never did. And if, in order fully to express my idea, I may use an expression perhaps a little pretentious, I should say, He was the most unsophisticated man that ever lived. Socrates was a philosopher,

Cæsar a soldier; Jesus—is Jesus of Nazareth. There is nothing more to be said.

I do not know that anybody ever undertook to demonstrate that any historical personage, Socrates or Cæsar for example, really belonged to the human race; but suppose such a demonstration had to be made, how would one set about it? I suppose by searching underneath the special traits of character and destiny, which distinguish these heroes from the rest of humanity, for those which they have in common with it. It might be said of Cæsar, although he was a soldier, very ambitious, and a great politician, still, in the feelings of his heart and the experiences of his life, he shares like a common mortal our human nature.

What shall we say of Jesus? You will try in vain to find out to what class He belongs, to rob Him of His costume, to define Him first, that you may afterwards compare Him with others. You will seek in vain in this case for the man underneath the hero, for the hero is the man himself.

Now, as He appears to us in the extreme simplicity of His personality, what of the essential experience of human life is wanting to Him?

Need I say that He has a body like our own; a body which eats, drinks, sleeps, is fatigued, suffers, which faints, which dies. Need I say either that He has a heart which loves, which vibrates with all our affections in turn—those of the family, of friendship, the love of country, and, above all, to those of humanity.

He has a spirit, which is moved, which trembles, which fears and hopes, is agitated and indignant, which is acquainted with the thrill of joy, and the agony of grief. He is a son; a citizen; He has been a carpenter; He is poor; but, above all, He is a man, and so completely a man, that men of every age, and every clime, recognise Him as a brother. In fact, we all feel more attracted to Him than to any historical personage whatever; before regarding them simply as men, we think of them as Greeks, Romans, or men of ancient or of modern times. The Roman poet has said: "I am

a man, and nothing which is human is foreign to me." I know of but one figure underneath which these words might be inscribed with perfect truth, and that is the figure of Jesus of Nazareth.

But I have just remembered a reservation which occurs to you. There is one thing you say which He has not experienced. There is one mark which He has not received, and which is enough to isolate Him absolutely from the rest of the human race. We have searched well, but have not been able to find it. What is it? Sin. Sin; yes, I cannot deny this is a family trait which we all have in common. Take man in the past, in the present, in every stage of civilisation, in every latitude, take him from among the noblest of the race, as well as from among the most degraded, everywhere you will find the ineffaceable mark of the original stain, everyone receives his share of the lamentable heritage, which the generations of men have transmitted from age to age.

Everyone who opens his eyes to the light of life comes dowered beforehand with this wealth of

sorrow. Not one escapes his lot of misery and infamy. Jesus is a stranger to it, it is true. You will not recognise Him by this sign.

But is this, then, the sign by which man recognises his species? Is it one of the essentials, without which he would cease to be what his Creator made him? Will you say, that the more closely a man follows the law of his development, the more he will infallibly develop the germ of every vice? Will you say, then, that the more a man disgraces and degrades himself, the more he is a man? Has anyone ever said that physical deformity was one of the signs of our race, and that he is wanting in the characteristics of manhood, who is neither maimed nor lame? And do you not see that moral deformities remove us still further from our original state, in the same sense, but far more than physical deformities? Language has endorsed this fact, my brethren, for the indulgent qualification, which it applies to our passions and our vices, is to call them failings.

II. They are, indeed, the disgrace, the weak-

ness of the soul. But the human mind, thank God, degraded as it is, has features by which it may be recognised, besides its failings and infirmities. If the mass of men were reduced to a crowd of invalids in a hospital, would they refuse to acknowledge as a brother the healthy visitor who came to dress their wounds? No, my brethren; if Jesus appears to be exempt from the ills that afflict us, let us seek a better sign of His fraternity with those whom He came to seek and to save. It is on our good side that He resembles us. I will show you this sign, my brethren (for we have not fallen so low as not to apprehend the legitimate evidence of it): it is the noble and holy liberty of a soul, which knowing no other law than the sovereign and righteous will of God, carries on His work here below in the path which God has marked out for Him, and without being subject to anyone, by a natural ascendancy, He subjects all things to Himself.

Independent of the flesh, He subjugates the lower parts of His nature, never suffering them to

rule Him. Like us He has a body to serve Him, but never does He, like us, become its slave; He fatigues Himself to the point of suffering, never to that of discouragement. He loves with a tenderness that has never been surpassed, but which never gives rise in the transparent atmosphere of His soul to the most imperceptible shade of sensuality.

Independent of men, He rules the society of His fellow-men, while serving them with the most absolute devotion. He is the best citizen among the people, without ever partaking their prejudices or their passions. Of all masters He is the gentlest and most humble, without ever allowing Himself to be restrained in His course by His disciples—those most impressionable men.

He receives the most enthusiastic ovations, yet not a hair of His head is moved by the breath of popularity. The most implacable enemies conspire against Him, without occasioning Him to make the slightest concession to them through

cowardice or fear, even when the tempest raged most violently.

Independent of nature, as the spirit is independent of matter, He rules creation, and exerts an empire over it, which excites astonishment and admiration, and which, while to every candid mind it manifests the intervention of the invisible God, is no less an evidence of the regal power conferred on man in the beginning, but of which he lost the secret in his fall.

Simple and true, humble and great, without preparation or effort, His soul filled with God, He is at home in God's universe like a child in his father's house. Now, fix the eye of your mind on God's thoughts at the moment when He said to Himself: "Let us make man in our own image;" then fix it on Jesus Christ, and I defy you to repress the exclamation, "Behold the Man!"

I have told you, my brethren, that I will speak to you in the second place to-day of the plan of the Son of Man.

The life of every man on earth answers to an internal picture which the mind contemplates within itself. It is what is seen within that determines the spectacle that is presented to others. From the day when we begin to be conscious of our existence, we behold within ourselves an image, an ideal apparition of the drama of the future. At first it is but a faint and fugitive sketch, but it attracts us more and more, captivates us, invites us to complete it, until all our faculties are engaged upon it, as if to fix upon an invisible canvass this first sketch, which seems to have been traced by some invisible hand in order to evoke our activity.

The idea changes, the design becomes complicated, the colours change, the starting point can no longer be recognised. But never mind! during every moment of existence, every one has something or other which he contemplates within him. This something is the plan of his life. We draw it with one hand, while we carry it out with the other.

If you wish to know what a man is, ask what he contemplates within himself.

We are in the year 1782. I will lead you to the Military School at Brienne, and show you a child with a passion for study, but whose one idea is to apply the knowledge which he acquires from books to the art of war. The games to which he incites his comrades and in which he excels, are nothing but mock sieges and battles.

Let us observe the child.

Twenty years later he is a man, he has taken Toulon, has gone through the Italian campaigns, and conducted the expedition to Egypt. In the uniform of a General, with a pensive and dreamy air, he is pacing the alleys of a park close to the gates of the capital of France, which already belongs to him. What is the future Emperor thinking of? Twenty years later, dying upon a rock in the ocean after long years of captivity, the same man, just before yielding up his spirit, only interrupts the lethargic silence into which he has sunk to utter the words: “*Tête de l’armée!*”

What is the illustrious dying man thinking of? If you could see the series of pictures which have successively engrossed his attention unrolled before your eyes, you would know more of the great Napoleon than from all the detailed recital of the wonders of his history.

Now, my brethren, I would fain know what occupied the thoughts of the Son of Man. A trait of His childhood shows Him already to be under the influence of a pre-occupation which increased and became exclusive and absorbing. His parents took Him to Jerusalem; He was present at the great solemnity of the Passover; He saw the crowd assembled in the temple court; He has visited the city which killed the prophets; He has listened to the doctors; He became lost in thought. When asked the reason of a stay which seemed inexplicable, He replied: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Afterwards, when the business of His trade took Him back to Nazareth, near the companions of

His childhood, in order to unfold to them the character which He attributed to Himself, He unrolled in their midst the book of Isaiah, and read these words: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*

Many times, in the midst of the crowds assembled to listen to Him, or during His intimate intercourse with His disciples, He spoke words of sublime simplicity and of unfathomable depth, which betray, so to speak, the deep springs within His soul.

His aim was to found the Kingdom of God. His desire is, that all may be one in Him, as He is one with the Father. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."† To what interior views, to what perspectives of the

* Isaiah lxi. 1. 2.

† Luke xix. 10.

soul do these utterances respond? What is it that He meditates on in the secret sanctuaries of thought?

I imagine myself present during one of the scenes of His life. I stop to contemplate Him as He sits on Jacob's Well, waiting for His disciples, who had gone to the neighbouring town. He is alone and pensive, His eyes fixed on the fields white already to harvest.

I see Him surrounded by a multitude, who bring to Him their sick, their afflicted, their children; He is silent; He reads the expression of the various countenances; but His heart is touched, His breast heaves, and His disciples depict Him as moved with compassion.

Arrived at the end of His earthly career, nailed upon the cross, absorbed in solemn thought of His work which is drawing to a close, recurring to the past, taking possession of the future, He exclaims: "It is finished!" What is it, then, at these moments, and at various others, which you can add for yourselves (for no other life

presents such a uniform pre-occupation), what is it, then, that He is meditating upon ?

But it is not enough to enquire into His life in order to understand His thoughts.

After all, His life is so simple, it made so little noise, it throws so little external light, that it is possible to overlook the unheard-of proportions of the pre-occupation which filled it. We have not the usual modes of estimating it. The men who have made their mark in history are known by the eloquence of their discourses, the depth of their writings, by the tumult of the political or social agitations which they led. In their case we must see the picture in its frame, and it seldom extends beyond the limits of the contemporary age. But what characterises the Son of Man, on the contrary, is that His simple life appears to be the expression of an idea more vast and more profound as ages roll on, and as the human race advances in the path of its destinies.

What wonders there are, of which we are constrained to say to-day, they entered into

His thoughts, though never suspected by His contemporaries; and what wonders there doubtless are which we do not yet see, but of which our descendants will say: "He foresaw this also." The history of the world during these eighteen centuries is but the transcription, scarcely yet begun, of what He saw. And all that He did foresee will not be made manifest until the world's history shall have passed through all the stages of its development.

But let us try to catch a glimpse of what He saw, although we cannot see it wholly. There are in the soul of the Son of Man two pictures, which appear to me to have been both habitually before His mind. First, the view of human misery. He met, as we meet, with pain and suffering, in His course through life; but while in our case it only causes a temporary distraction from our ordinary thoughts, it was so impressed upon Him, that nothing could efface the stamp of it, and nothing could exceed the depth and correctness of the view He took of it. At every

step, He was touched by the scenes of suffering unfolded before Him; but within, His emotion spread, and overstepped the limits of His country, to embrace sufferers in every clime; it overstepped the limits of the present, to embrace all the losses, all the catastrophes, all the desolations of the future. In a word, He leant His ear to the universal concert of distress which arises without interruption from the surface of our globe, and not only so, but He saw the tragic significance and the untold depths of it. He saw evil not only in the infinite variety of its external manifestations, but in the sinister fecundity of its principle; He saw in sin the fatal source which affects all mankind, and pours into every life the double poison of death and curse. These are abysses, my brethren, which it makes us giddy to look down. He was constantly measuring the extent and depth of them.

But there was another picture which was also continually before His eyes: that of humanity raised and restored to perfection. He saw within

Himself our Father which is in heaven, His name hallowed, His kingdom come, His will done on earth as it is in heaven. He saw idols everywhere deposed, and the true God everywhere adored. In this universal worship, He saw the principle of a genuine fraternity, the barriers between nations thrown down, the chains of the slave unloosed, the hostility between rich and poor abolished, the weapons of war transformed into implements of peace, the wolf lying down with the lamb.

He saw peace enter into all hearts with pardon, and with pardon a joy that nothing can take away. He saw God as all in all, all united in God.

A sage of Greece has written a book, in which he drew the plan of an ideal society, such as he conceived it in his philanthropic dreams. You know that I allude to the Republic of Plato.

Jesus did not write His republic, but it was traced in His soul; and He had it all His life before His eyes. We can form an idea of it, very

imperfect, no doubt, but still an idea, if we imagine what society would be, constructed on the ideal of Gospel perfection, a society where all were of one heart and of one soul, and where these maxims were in force: "Blessed are the meek;"* "A new commandment, I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you;"† "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."‡ We call this ideal; but know that our ideal can never be anything but a pale reflection of the realities of the future, as it was contemplated by Jesus in the recesses of His soul.

Humanity sunk into the abyss of evil and misery; humanity raised up to bliss and glory—these are the two pictures which absorbed Him in contemplation.

The first, the view of what is, but will soon no longer be; the second, the view of what is not yet, but which is preparing for us in the future. A supreme and total change is about to be ac-

* Matt. v. 5.

† John xiii. 34.

‡ John iv. 24.

complished in the destinies of the human race ; after darkness, light ; after death, life ; after the bondage of Satan, the glorious liberty of the children of God.

He sees it, He proclaims it, He is there to preside over it. It is His work, more clear before His eyes than any other work ever was to any one called to undertake it.

This pre-occupied Him even in His childhood. This was His Father's business which claimed His care. This was the kingdom of God of which He proclaimed the advent. These are the good tidings which He will charge His disciples to announce to the world, after having been Himself in turn their apostle and martyr. The greatest efforts of the greatest geniuses and of the purest minds had not, before He came, attained to anything more than to lending a voice to the groans of man's conscience ; they despaired of relieving them. " Unless it please God to send us some one from Him to instruct us," said Socrates to his pupil Alcibiades, " do not hope

ever to succeed in reforming the morals of men. The best course we can take is to wait patiently.” “Yes,” he went on, “we must wait till some one comes.”

Jesus takes care not to say that we must wait, He asserts that the thing is done; He asserts that some one is come, and that it is He Himself. This is what He cried in the streets, and proclaimed upon the housetops.

There is a formidable test, my brethren, in store for anyone who announces great designs: that of answering to great expectations. Now, when the Son of Man appeared in the world, He was expected; for, low as humanity had sunk, it never in its darkest hours despaired of improvement. It was always looked for, and it is one of the greatest spectacles of history to watch the dawn of this great hope, vague at first, but becoming more general and more definite, which was spread throughout the world, of seeing some day an ambassador from God, one who would bring a revelation, a what shall I say? one sung by poets,

longed for by sages, and baptized beforehand by the touching name of the "Desire of all nations."

Nothing would be easier than to accumulate testimony to this fact. The traditions of all nations agree in it, and in the writings of the philosophers how many words there are similar to these of Socrates just quoted, which express the highest aspirations of the ancient heathen.

But, above all, you know the oracles of the ancient prophets of Israel, so numerous, so precise, so universally known and venerated. They are like the voice which sustains the melody of this vast concert of nations, while the aspirations of the Socrates, the Platos, the Virgils and the Ciceros, the dreams of all the mythologies, and the figurative symbols of the false religions are only the obscure and distant accompaniment. "All the east," says the Roman historian Suetonius, "was full of the report of this ancient and profound opinion, that it was destined that some one should arise in Judea about this time, who would rule the universe."

It was a solemn moment in history, unique and without precedent, and which will never occur again. Silence reigns. The world is waiting. The scene is prepared. It only remains for some one to come and occupy it.

Who will venture to come forward? Let him appreciate the magnitude of the enterprise. Let him listen to the fluttering expectation of every heart. Let him ponder well, and ponder again and again, what he feels within him that can satisfy it. Who will venture to say, Here I am! It is I? The temptation was great—ambition succumbed to it. More than one audacious person appeared, who dared to say, It is I. Judas, the Gaulonite, Barchochebas, Dositheus. History has preserved their names as the most illustrious examples of human folly.

If in this assembly there is any scoffer, who for want of knowing Jesus Christ has not yet bowed the knee to Him, I only ask one thing of him, that he will cast his eyes on the form of the Son of Man, presenting Himself with His halo of

sublimity in answer to the universal expectation. That from this distance of time, he will consider the picture of the meek and lowly Master as He appeared upon the threshold of history, in the midst of humanity, then agitated with unusual grief, and announcing with that calm authority which is peculiar to Him, Here I am! It is I! Do not look for another. I have given ear to the voices which were calling me. I have probed your wounds, and am come to heal them. I am come to make all things new, and in proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord to bring life and immortality to light.

My brethren, centuries have passed; twenty times already the date of the world has been renewed since the manifestation of the Son of Man, and time, which brings down and buries one after another the great ones of the earth, has been for Him a pedestal, the base and height of which have been ever increasing. Now, consider what a prodigy it was to base His idea upon time, and consider the clearness, the wisdom, the con-

fidence in Himself which are pre-supposed when He said to Himself before saying it to the world : I am the Redeemer!

Every plan implies the adoption of a system of means to insure its realisation, and when an enterprise is presented to us like that of the Son of Man, we have a right to ask what are His resources, and how will He set about His task? He had but one resource, my brethren, and if you have a right to be amazed at the audacity of the end, you may well be much more amazed at the audacity of the means. For the means were Himself. "I am the way," He said, "I am the way, I am the means." And it is worthy of remark that His entire life was consequent on this strange pretension. Every one here below pursues a method of his own. Learned men dogmatise, conquerors fight battles, politicians build up constitutions. Consider what He did. He manifested Himself. I have spoken of His method. He has no method but that which light has : to enlighten by shining. If He speaks, it is

to unfold the wonders of His soul; if He is prodigal of benefits, it is to teach the world His infinite goodness; if He suffers, it is to show His meekness; if He gives His life, it is to show His devotion; if He takes it again, it is to manifest His power. He arose above the horizon of humanity; a man amongst men, He displayed Himself majestically at His entrance into life, pursued His course in a straight line to the summit, and arrived at the zenith, at the point where there are no more clouds, and whence His rays fell perpendicularly; He declared His work accomplished, and was able to say: "It is finished." It was not the mission of His disciples after Him to found empires or republics in His name, nor to construct a new system of things according to His ideal, nor to publish to the world any secret doctrine, but simply to bear witness for Him. Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, unto the uttermost parts of the earth;* and for this He promised them no other aid than His own

* Acts i. 8.

spiritual presence within them. "I will not leave you comfortless." * "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." † They preached, but what was their doctrine? "I determined not to know anything among you," wrote St. Paul to the Corinthians, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified." ‡ And to the Galatians: "Before whose eyes Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" § And St. John: That which we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled of the word of life, that declare we unto you. ||

They wrote books, but what books? The simple narrative of their intercourse with Him during the days of His flesh, or the enthusiastic expression of their spiritual intercourse with Him when they had ceased to know Him after the flesh. They founded an institution, but what kind of an institution? The Church, which they call the body of Christ, animated by His spirit, the vivid

* John xiv. 18. † Matt. xxviii. 20. ‡ I Cor. ii. 2.

§ Gal. iii. 1. || I John i. 1, 3.

reproduction of Christ, in order to continue His work by making Him known to the ends of the earth, and to the end of time.

Do not exclaim against it as a paradox, my brethren, the Son of Man has instituted no other means of salvation than Himself. That there is much that is astonishing in it I am quite willing to agree; but it is a fact, nevertheless, which we must prove. With this end in view, I will recall some of the needs to which He responded, and bring before your view some of the promises which He has made to us.

In the first place, there are promises for minds that have gone astray in seeking after truth. O, how He anticipates with tender and sympathetic compassion the wants of those noble seekers after truth, whose gaze, like the eagle's, tries to penetrate the clouds in order to gaze on the sun! How He calls them around Him in order to satisfy them! Come, then, you who have devoted your lives to the sacred labours of thought. Here is a Doctor who will teach you what you want

to know. He is come, He says, to bear witness to the truth. But assuredly you have not listened to any doctor like Him before.

He has no school like your philosophers: His school is the highway, the public streets, the dwellings of the poor, the temple of the Lord, the shores of the lake, the slopes of the mountains, the earth itself beneath the vault of heaven—the world, in fact. He has no system like those who have before professed to guide you. What He offers you will not have been arrived at by continuing the labours of those who have gone before, by building up His lucubrations upon theirs. He will offer truth to you which flows from the very source of truth, and which sheds its light alike on minds of the most common order and of the highest genius, a truth which less instructs as a science than clothes as a character, but which is no less the truth, the sole, central, sovereign truth, the truth which sages have searched for in vain, and which without Him would never have reached the heart of man.

To Him who possesses it, all things are made new, the darkness is past, the problem of our destiny is solved, and light and immortality are brought to light; the face of God is revealed in all its glory, and the soul has but to plunge and replunge eternally in the inexhaustible spring of all wisdom and knowledge. "Ye shall know the truth," He said, "and the truth shall make you free."* But what, then, is the meaning of this almost mysterious promise?

Permit, O Master, that once more at least, we ask Thee with all sincere and honest souls: What is truth? Listen, I am the truth! Is not this the answer?

The Son of Man has promises for broken hearts. Need it be said that He has the most tender compassion for all sufferers. Behold how He loves them. But what distinguishes Him from others is, that He is far from expressing His sympathy with that tone of patient resignation which characterises the helpless pity of even the best of

* John viii. 32.

men. On the contrary, He presents Himself with a serene and indestructible confidence in the sovereign and universal efficacy of His remedies.

“Come unto me,” He cried in the highways and public streets, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Come, then, all ye innumerable people who are afflicted of the Lord; come hither ye poor, sick, orphans, inconsolable widows; you with blighted lives; you who have been deceived, perhaps exasperated, to whom earth has offered nothing but dust to quench the thirst which devours you. Here is One who at least will not deceive you. Your bruised heart, shuddering within you at the blast of trial, like the leaf blown about by the tempest, “Let not your heart be troubled,” you shall have peace, a peace which the world cannot give, a peace which will surpass your comprehension. As far as you extend your gaze towards the horizon, you will only discover an ocean of grief, the pitiless waves of which beat against and sub-

merge you without ceasing. There you will be immersed in perfect joy, which nothing henceforth can take away. Your griefs themselves shall be turned into joy, your cries of despair into songs of gladness. Convinced to despair of the inexorable nature of the sorrows which afflict you, you have stopped your ears and have cried out: Woe to those that mourn, for there is certainly no consolation. He said: "Blessed are they that mourn!" Blessed! for there is consolation; and consolation so great that the most perfect earthly happiness is not to be compared to the most bitter grief, if it has the effect of procuring it for you.

Only accept from the hands of this new Physician, the balm which He offers for your wounds, and you will no longer have anything to wish for, nothing to ask of any one, you will have neither regrets for the past, deception in the present, nor anxiety for the future, no more sighs nor scalding tears, you will have done with all these things; supreme happiness, heaven itself will fill your heart. You will be at the source of inexhaustible

satisfaction, and will have nothing to do but to take long draughts from it both in time and eternity. But what then, O Master, is Thy infallible remedy? Listen! I am the spring which rises in life eternal. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink!”* “He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.”† Is not this His answer?

But there is something yet more astonishing. The Son of Man has a remedy for burdened consciences, and do you not see that it is in these cases that we behold His most tender compassion?

Listen, then, ye sinners, and men of evil lives; ye who bear the load of crime and shame, dregs of our race, crowds of degraded people, to whom the society of your equals offers no alternative but the mire and despair.

Listen attentively, for here at last is One who will not fear to soil His hands by contact with yours. He says that He came not for the righteous but for sinners. He came to seek and

* John vii. 37.

† John iv. 14.

to save that which was lost! Lost! You hear what He says, and in His mouth, the word signifies lost women, lost malefactors, lost in the dens of vice, and on the verge of execution. He is come to seek you, but what has He to offer you? He has the means of absolutely effacing your lives, repulsive as they perhaps have been. He has for your degraded profaned souls, a virginity more pure than that of the new-born babe. For your livery of infamy, He will give you a robe of righteousness, compared with which the stars are not pure; though your sins be as scarlet and your conscience black as hell, He will render all within you as white as snow, and as pure as the heavens.

These at least are His promises, and you know that I do not exaggerate them. Indeed they go much further still, for He declares that the same regeneration is necessary for the most honest and honoured among men as for the reprobate. You may well be astonished, but it is not I that speak, it is He.

Such are the offers that He makes to the worst, that they may well be the envy of the best.

Such is the beauty of this new righteousness with which He clothes the wretched, that all other righteousness must appear like filthy rags which make him who wears them blush. Come, then, the most eminent among the people, the righteous, the refined, who are trying, but without success, to rear the tottering edifice of your assurance before God. He invites you to pull down all this scaffolding, that you may rely upon the assurances which He Himself gives liberally to all. No more illusions, no more pretensions, no more false semblances of innocence. Let all masks be torn off, and the garments be removed that the wounds may be seen, and your hearts laid bare. You, too, are lost: do you not feel it to be so? You cannot stand before the eye of God. But you also will be saved. But what then is this new secret, O Master, by which Thou wilt resuscitate those who are dead and dying of sin?

Listen! "I am the way." "He that hath the Son hath eternal life."

"I am the way! I am peace! I am the truth! I am the way!" But who is it then who thus speaks, and what place does He assume amongst us?

There is but one sun in the natural world which can say, It is I who diffuse light and warmth; it is I who make day after night, and spring after winter. Look at me all ye creatures, look and ye shall live. Is there not then also a sun in the spiritual world; and is not His name Jesus?

My brethren, we must know what we are to believe. We will closely question Him who comes to us with enormous and exorbitant pretensions. It was His will to manifest Himself to the world. We will pause before this manifestation; we will look at it from all sides. This is but fair. We will question Him as to His rights, I promise you. Inasmuch as we are men, we have conditions to propose to this Man before according Him the homage to which He lays claim. There are three

of them. First, we must watch Him face to face with sin, then with suffering, then with death; for from His attitude before this triple abyss into which we have all fallen, our attitude in His presence depends. It is not we who have pushed the question to this extreme; it is He Himself, as you have heard. Such is the way in which He presents Himself to the world, that either He must fall into the dust, or we must fall into the dust at His feet. He is everything or nothing. He is but what you are, my brethren, what I am, less indeed, unless to Him belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory!

It is clear that I have no right to anticipate to-day, a conclusion which involves a long and conscientious study on your part and mine before it can be established. Nevertheless, there is an order of consideration which I have intentionally excluded from our subject, but from which, I may, perhaps, be permitted to borrow something in concluding this first discourse. I propose to speak of experience. Whatever be the legitimate right of

the Son of Man to our entire confidence, or to use the language of the Gospel, to our faith, the fact remains that, during eighteen centuries, faith in Him has accomplished marvels. Our memories are full of them. I will cite one or two examples.

A pastor, whose name I could mention, related one day in my presence the following fact:—"A few years ago a woman died in my parish, whose history I had followed from her youth. She had known happy, even brilliant days. But trials gradually came and crushed her. From a position of ease she was reduced to destitution, so far as to be dependent on charity—so cruel a trial to sensitive minds. She had not at once been robbed of all the objects of her affection, but one by one, all those who had solaced her sufferings and conduced to her happiness, died. Alone and desolate, as a climax to her troubles, she was attacked by one of the most cruel maladies which afflict humanity: for months she languished upon a bed of torture, with nothing to look forward to but a gradual aggravation of her sufferings, pre-

vious to a painful and inevitable death. One day, on entering her miserable abode, my heart pained beforehand at the idea of so much suffering concentrated in one person, I found her in tears, which she in vain endeavoured to hide. Thinking that some new trouble had arisen—‘My poor friend,’ I said, taking her hand, ‘what has happened?’ ‘Oh sir!’ she answered, smiling at my mistake, ‘it was for joy I was weeping, not for grief, for as you came in I was thinking of my Saviour.’ And this joy never forsook her to the hour of her terrible, but tranquil departure. Now I can attest,” added my friend “upon my conscience, that of all the miserable beings that I have met with during the forty years of my ministry, this woman was the most unfortunate.” Perhaps this incident has one defect which may prevent it from striking you: that it is too common, for there is scarcely a minister, be he ever so young, who could not relate similar cases from his own experience. Is there one Christian, is there one man amongst you who could not say

from his own experience, I have known such persons loaded with misfortune and yet weeping or joy.

Here is the other case which I have promised you. In 1662, near Paris, the life of one of the greatest geniuses which have adorned our race was brought to a close. He was well acquainted with all the seductions of science, and all the intoxication of early fame, but also with the torments of thought and the agonies of doubt. In the flower of his age, at thirty-nine, just when his splendid faculties were fully developed, he died like a saint. There was found amongst the treasures which have given him the first rank amongst the most eminent men, a paper, entitled "Confession." It expresses, in language sublime in its candour and simplicity, a perfectly contented state of mind, breathing nothing but peace and love—heaven itself; and it concludes with these words: "These are my sentiments, and every day I bless my Redeemer who inspired me with them, and who has made a man, full of weakness, misery, concupiscence,

pride and ambition, exempt from all these evils, by the power of His grace. To Him all the glory is due, for of myself I have nothing but misery and error." If there were any need to seek for the explanation of this, it would be found in another paper, which he was in the habit of religiously carrying about with him, in memory of a memorable night, during which, in his opinion, the eternal fate of his soul was decided. These are the last words traced in letters of fire: "Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ—I have separated myself from Him, I have fled from Him, renounced Him, crucified Him—may I never again be separated from Him! Entire and sweet renunciation!" Only one thing is wanting to make this instance as common as the other: that there should be a larger number of men comparable to Blaise Pascal.

Such, however, is Jesus Christ. Traverse with Him the heights and depths of humanity. Follow Him into the lowliest places of the earth, and you

will see the lowest, the most wretched of men arise in turn from the dust or the pallet to utter songs, and shed tears of joy at His approach. And if thence, still in company with Him, you ascend the most lofty mountains, you will hear genius stammer forth before Him, words of humble gratitude and entire reconciliation. I may therefore say to you henceforth, without fear of misleading you—Go to Him! Amen.





II.

The Holy One and the Just.

“The Holy One and the Just.”—*Acts* iii. 14.

LOST and sinful man has a right to enquire into the moral worth of Him who comes to seek and to save him. This is our subject to-day.

Everything is so closely blended in the august person of the Son of Man, and so rapidly does He radiate light, that I might already refer you to our first discourse. I have only, as yet, introduced Him, but I have not been able to speak of Him without inundating you with light.

In trying to present to you the striking humanity of His person, I have been constrained to bring forward the most pure and noble traits

of humanity itself. (Are not the most pure and noble traits always the most human?)

In giving you a glimpse of the inmost thought with which He presented Himself to the world, and of the plan which He came to realise, I have been constrained to direct your attention to a mind, the sublimity of whose views naturally implies the sublimity of the mind itself. If grand ideas come from the heart, and if a great design can only originate in a great heart, the most holy and vast of all designs could only have originated in an extraordinarily noble and holy heart.

The idea of proposing Himself to the human race as an object of faith, that is to say of love, admiration, and adoration, supposes a consciousness of such pre-eminence, or the alternative of such absurdity, that one is constrained to recognise in Him who propounds it, a presumption at least in favour of His right to the adoration and faith of the human race. This, however, I freely acknowledge, requires demonstration.

The pretensions of the Son of Man are too

great to be sustained of themselves in this way, and the conscience to which they are seriously presented can only admit them on one imperious condition: that of finding the ideal of perfection realised in Him in all its fulness. If a single individual of those whom He professes to save could cause Him to cast His eyes to the ground by looking Him in the face; if a single individual of those to whom He says, "Come unto me, and ye shall have life," could reply to Him: "I am better and greater than thou,"—if such a thing were possible, we agree that nothing more would be required to annihilate Him, and to expose the whole enterprise to derision. We have seen the golden head of the statue: let us assure ourselves that the feet are not of clay.

I begin by calling attention to one point—that we are in the presence of a well-attested fact.

When we put the question respecting the moral worth of Jesus Christ, we have at once to face a whole hierarchy of witnesses, who, without hesitation, unite in ascribing absolute perfection

to Him. The first of these witnesses is Himself. Every one has a certain impression of his own character, and the further advanced a man is in the path of holiness, the more you will generally find him disposed to condemn himself, because as he trains himself his conscience becomes more enlightened, and discovers fresh abysses which separate him from the end in view. "I do not know what the heart of a villain may be," said the Count de Maistre, "I only know that of a virtuous man, and that is frightful!" St. Paul goes still further in describing himself as the chief of sinners, given up to sin, one in whom dwelleth no good thing. And to speak generally of this estimate, St. John declares that if any man say that he has no sin, he deceiveth himself, he is the dupe of an illusion.

The fact, nevertheless, is, that Jesus, the most humble and clear-sighted of men, did assume perfection. Not only did He utter such words as these: "The prince of this world hath nothing in me;"* "The Father hath not left me alone;

* John xiv. 30.

for I do always those things which please him ;” *
“ And now, O Father, glorify thou me ; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do ;” †
but never, during the whole of His life, can you surprise Him in a moment of doubt or hesitation about His moral sovereignty.

He presented to His disciples the duty of perfection with the majesty of law itself. He said quite naturally : “ Light is come into the world ;” “ I am the light of the world ;” “ And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” ‡

He who began His ministry by crying out, “ Repent and be converted,” who thirsted for the repentance of the whole world, and assumed that all consciences are sinful before God, never had the least suspicion that He could stand in the slightest need of repentance Himself. He bore within Him a virgin conscience, glorious, immaculate. He was radiant with inward peace, and the sound of His footsteps, the tones of His voice,

* John viii. 29. † John xvii. 4. ‡ John v. 27.

the mute language of His aspect, seemed to murmur incessantly this refrain: Holy, harmless, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens.* Add to this the impression produced upon those around Him by His majestic appearance. The evidence of this has been preserved for us. I do not speak only of the crowds of people whom He subjugated, and kept enchained by an unexampled ascendancy, of their simple admiration, or of that boundless trust in Him which attached the weight of truth itself to the words which fell from His lips. If we could have sat on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias, or on the slopes of the hills around the valley, while He opened to the multitude the treasures of His mind, we should not have escaped the enthusiasm which made even the most prejudiced exclaim: "Never man spake like this man." But we all know that it is not much to see the attitude of a man in public when all eyes are upon him, and perhaps the natural thought would have occurred

* Hebrews vii. 26.

to us, that in order to know Him thoroughly we must follow Him into private life. We know by experience that no man is a hero to his valet, and still less, alas! is any man a perfect saint to those who share the hazards of his private life. Now, my brethren, we have the evidence of men who were nearer to Him than a servant to his master, a child to his father, a traveller to his companion. These men were His disciples. It appears as if it had been their providential mission to study Him thoroughly, to bring His soul to the light of day in the most varied situations, the most solemn as well as the most common. They heard what He said in confidence as well as in His public discourses; His most familiar sayings as well as His most solemn declarations. They were with Him, their eyes were upon Him before He went out in the morning, when He returned in the evening, even during the hours of rest. Nothing in His life, absolutely nothing, could escape them. Now, the more closely we see them brought into contact with Him, the more do they

appear to be prostrated before Him with an admiration which has no parallel in the world. The perfection of their Master struck them with an instantaneous and ever-increasing persuasion. The brightness of the sun was not more evident to their eyes. They were at His feet, and drew the world after them. We have but the reflection of the effect it produced on them, and yet that reflection subjugates us. And it is not, as you know, that they launch out into exclamations of enthusiasm, it is not that they endeavour by any ingenious art to make the conclusions apparent, at which they have themselves arrived respecting their Master. So far from it, they would think it derogatory even to appear to praise Him, whom they call the Lord. They content themselves with saying, this is what we have seen and heard. They narrate the life of the most extraordinary personage as stories are written for children. Their pens appear to have been dipped in that gentle light which shone around them. Their conviction is so entire, so absolute, that it

becomes as it were transparent, and only communicates itself by the character of the evidence which it communicates to its object. The more one thinks of it, the more one is struck by the immense value of such testimony.

I am not likely to forget, that if the Son of Man had disciples He also had adversaries.

Does this surprise you? Do you not suppose that holiness always has its assailants here below. Jesus had them and will have through all time. All the passions, all the vices, all the opponents of the salvation of man were His enemies. So long as sin is incarnate in human nature, so long will it array its armies against Jesus Christ. As long as there are voluptuous, proud, ambitious, and hypocritical people—as long as there are souls preferring darkness to light—so long will there be men eager to confound Him, and whose interest it is to blacken Him. This also is homage, splendid and necessary homage. Far from being surprised that He received it, we should have great reason to doubt His character

if He had not. From that time until this we have seen men of pleasure incensed against Him by His purity, false zealots by His sincerity, selfish men by His love, formalists by His spirituality. Alas! every species of adversary that He has had since, was already assembled around Him at Jerusalem, to extinguish Him had it been possible. They formed the most formidable league against Him, and conceived the most skilful plot in order to confound Him. With a clear-sightedness and an astuteness that could only have been inspired by hell, they saw that the only means of ruining Him was to surprise Him into some error. "If this man make a single *faux pas*," they said to themselves, "it is all over with Him;" and they were right. Observe them then about His path; spying out all His proceedings, putting a meaning upon every action, watching every word to see if they could not find in it the semblance of a pretext for accusation.

And not only so; they set the most cunning

snare for His steps; they tried to make Him contradict Himself, to put Him into difficulties from which there was no escape. For three months they did their utmost to try to catch Him in His talk. But they were utterly frustrated. Their growing exasperation is sufficient proof of this. They looked for faults in Him with such obstinacy and craftiness, because they could not detect one.

What did they care for one sinner more or less among the people, whom they called accursed? But one acknowledged by all to be a saint, a king of souls and consciences, was what they could not tolerate. It was the lustre of His innocence that especially provoked their rage. And if they ever succeed in defeating Him, it will only be by bearing a new and supreme testimony to Him in their own fashion. Even at the moment of their triumph, Jesus could say to them with His habitual calmness: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Pilate, while giving way to their violence, said in his turn, while washing his

hands: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person."

The thief crucified with Him was converted solely by the evidence of His moral sovereignty. A Roman centurion who had watched all these events, when all was finished, exclaimed: "Certainly this was a righteous man."

Thus, admiration has survived ignominy, and the disgraceful death of the Son of Man, far from abasing Him in the esteem of men, has only served to give stronger testimony to the unprecedented impression which has been produced by His life. For the disciples of Jesus Christ, of whatever age or country, the perfection of their crucified Master is the axiom of axioms, an article of morality as well as an article of faith. It is not only the corner stone, it is the very condition of their existence as an association.

You have heard of the palaces of ice which are sometimes built in Russia, the work of a season, to disappear in spring. They are real habitations presenting every appearance of harmony and

solidity; but one condition is necessary for their existence, and when this is wanting, all melts away, and some fine day not a vestige remains of this *chef d'œuvre* of art. The Church is this edifice, my brethren; it subsists only on one condition (more stable in truth than the temperature). Suppose, to imagine an impossibility, the discovery of a gigantic imposture, the discovery of a vice, of a single failing in the life of Jesus Christ, such as we may find in our own lives by hundreds, and this magnificent edifice in which so many generations of men have found shelter, I will not say it melts away, but it is eclipsed. Nothing remains of it—not an atom worth preserving; you take it up, it crumbles away in your hand. Here, then, are millions of millions of men, of every class and of every shade of culture, including the most profound thinkers and the most subtle moralists, who for eighteen centuries have been contemplating the face of Jesus Christ, reading His soul and weighing His character, and they proclaim unanimously, in the

face of the world, not only that they have not been able to find a trace of imperfection, but that they cannot find a grandeur or moral beauty which does not find its definite and realised type in Him.

You yourselves, whoever you are, whether you will or not, instinctively obey this impression. We have, in fact, made Jesus Christ the law of our moral world; we have learnt to rate and verify everything according to Him; we feel that to depart from Him is to depart from good; to approach Him is the highest and purest expression of the law of duty. It is a unique fact which raises Jesus Christ to an incomparable height above the men who have bequeathed their memory to the admiration of their fellows.

In every sphere of human greatness, the name of a great man immediately evokes the names of other great men, his peers, with whom we involuntarily compare him. But in the sphere of perfection, if the name of Jesus Christ is pronounced, every other name remains in shadow;

He has neither equal nor rival; and this Being so true, so natural, so human, appears to us in the very bosom of humanity, in mystic isolation, solely from the radiance of His human beauty.

My brethren, I take this impression for what it is—a fact. And pausing here, I cast a rapid glance over the first results arrived at from our study. We are now in possession of three traits which constitute provisionally what I will call our characteristics of the Son of Man.

We know that He conceived the most extraordinary project which ever entered into the mind of man—a project compared with which the most gigantic enterprises, inspired by the most gigantic ambition, are mere child's play. He saw that the world was not going on well, He conceived the idea of setting it to rights; He saw that humanity was in suffering, He resolved to cure it; He saw that sin was the source of all evil, and He said to Himself: "I will take away the sin of the world." Besides which, we know that

for the accomplishment of this unheard-of design, He did not pretend to employ any other means than Himself. Creating a new world on the ruins of the old, He was willing to take the whole weight of it on His shoulders. It was by manifesting Himself, and proposing Himself for universal contemplation, that He stirred men's consciences, conquered their hearts, and transformed their ideas and morals; in a word, that He made all things new. We know, further, that, Himself believing in the absolute perfection of His moral character, He impressed this conviction on the minds of His immediate contemporaries, and has made it a fundamental article of faith with an immense and ever-increasing posterity. I repeat that these are facts, and that the man to whom they refer did really live. Now suppose for a moment that we were totally ignorant of the details of His life.

Try to reconstruct it by an effort of imagination. What idea would you form of it?

You will agree that this is a historical problem

which will occasion us strange perplexities. When I hear of a conqueror, of a man who wishes to enthrone his dominion in the world, I immediately picture him at the head of his armies, issuing commands to his marshals, gathering the people together, and making the earth tremble beneath the steps of his legions. If I hear of a benefactor to mankind wishing to introduce some salutary reform on a grand scale, I immediately think of a philanthropic prince enthroned in his capital, surrounded by his ministers, and covering his states with new and beneficent institutions. But a man who conceived the idea, both of making himself the centre of the world and of reforming it—What fabulous expeditions will he undertake? What capital will he choose for his residence? What gigantic springs of administration will he set in motion? On the other hand, when I hear of a man who aspires to perfection and whose name survives him, as we say, in the odour of sanctity, I immediately think of a contemplative recluse, engrossed in mortifying the flesh in order to en-

franchise the spirit, fleeing temptations, fasting, meditating, absorbed in solitude and silence. But a man possessing from the first and preserving to the end a state of absolute sanctity, a man indisputably reputed perfect—what impassable barriers did he contrive to place from his infancy between the world and himself; with what triple cuirass of brass did he protect his heart? One would think he must be a man whose eyes saw nothing, whose ears heard nothing, whose flesh never shuddered, whose heart never beat quickly, whose feet, for all I know, never touched the earth.

When I hear of a man who designs to dazzle his fellow-men, to fill them with admiration by attracting their attention to himself, I imagine some mortal crowned by nature with all her favours, and making a parade of her gifts; or some sage of solemn aspect, gathering other sages around him in order to make even the distinction accorded to him by his disciples a pedestal in the eyes of the profane vulgar. But a man, aspiring

to nothing less than to constitute himself the sole object of contemplation for the human race, a man who said: "Look unto me and ye shall want nothing, you will enjoy complete satisfaction"—in what fantastic costume will he clothe himself, and at what respectful distance will he hold the common herd of mortals by his mysterious majesty? But how can all these things be reconciled? I confess that my mind is lost, and after stumbling over impossibility after impossibility, and contradiction after contradiction, I limit myself to concluding, that if the earth really has been the theatre of such an existence, it has witnessed the most extraordinary, the most prodigious, and most unheard-of thing that can be imagined.

After this I open the Gospel, and read again that simple and touching history of the carpenter of Nazareth. Ah! grant that at the head of those things which would never have entered into the heart of man, must be placed this extraordinary prodigy of simplicity.

The Son of Man has appeared—you ask in what capital; you will be told in turn of Nazareth, Cana, Nain, Capernaum, villages and little towns of an obscure province. You enquire about His costume—Ah! He only wears the dress of an artizan of His country. You will imagine Him surrounded by a staff of great personages: His companions are Peter, James and John, boatmen and fishermen of the shores of the Lake of Galilee. You will open your eyes to behold the brilliant actions with which He will astonish the world, and inaugurate the great revolution which He foretells: His brilliant actions are to converse with a woman of Samaria as He sat on the well whence she came to draw water; to console a desolate mother by restoring to her the son for whom she weeps; to feed a famished multitude, but at the same time taking care to remind them that there is spiritual food more to be desired than the bread which perisheth; His great actions are to evangelise the poor, to weep with those that weep, to answer all those who ask for Him,

to anticipate the wants of those who are not seeking Him.

Will you seek Him? Do you wish to speak to Him? Ascend the hill near Jerusalem; enter that comfortable house, you will find Him in company with a brother and two sisters who are His friends—or knock at the door of that more humble abode, it is that of the mother-in-law of Peter, His disciple; the poor woman is ill, and wished to be visited by the Master, who has compassion on His kind. Or, again, enter that upper chamber at Jerusalem; He has come, according to the ancient usage of His people, to celebrate the Passover in the Holy City; He is supping with His disciples; one of them leans upon His breast, while they listen to words, the grandeur and sublimity of which penetrate and delight us to this day, as they doubtless delighted them, when they fell for the first time from His lips.

One abandons oneself unconsciously to the charm of freshness which is exhaled from the Gospel, and which is always surprising every time

that one recurs to it. What is the Master doing to-day? He has received an invitation for Himself and His disciples to be present at a wedding feast in the house of friends in Cana in Galilee. He knows that among His people these times are occasions of rejoicing, at which they indulge in all the hopes of life. But this will not be with Him a reason for refusing: He will go; and, mark well, He will not go as an ascetic, to protest by a crabbed countenance against the joyfulness of the company; He will take a part in it by joining His good wishes and felicitations with theirs; above all, He will go to sanctify it by something (I know not what) within Him which extracts from every occasion a perfume, as it were, to the glory of God. Another time, what is it that I see? The Master is sitting in the midst of His disciples—He is teaching, and an attentive crowd are hanging upon His words. Some mothers (they are the same everywhere, and have but one idea), some mothers agree to break the ranks, pushing their little children before them; they wish to present them

to Him. This naturally causes a disturbance. The disciples reprove these indiscreet women. Jesus interferes. It is said that He was much displeased. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not!" And see, He occupies Himself with them, caresses and blesses them, then looking up, He said: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."*

Did He not in truth sometimes forget Himself? Happy parents, who are preparing for the nuptials of your sons and daughters; happy mothers, who gaze upon your first-born in the cradle with those far-reaching thoughts of the heart, do you not shudder at the bare idea of what would be wanting in the Gospel without the narrative of the marriage of Cana in Galilee, or that of the blessing of little children?

But I allow that these are isolated incidents,

* Matt. xviii. 4, 5.

and it is true that His heart more often led him to sinners to proclaim pardon to them, and to the unhappy to lavish His consolations upon them. One might even say that there was something like a hidden virtue in Him that attracted them. The routes along which He passed were crowded with them, and as soon as He arrived at a place, they everywhere hastened to bring them to Him. He was then seen as it were to multiply Himself, to dispense His benefits, without ever neglecting an opportunity of speaking to souls, to call them to repentance and pardon; and always in a manner at once so apropos and sublime, that His words were precisely appropriate to each particular case, precisely those which should be heard to the ends of the earth, and which will endure when heaven and earth shall pass away.

But it is time to introduce some order into the reflections to which the spectacle of his life naturally gives rise. Jesus proclaimed the extraordinary character which true holiness should present :

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except your

righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"†

All His precepts tend to perfection, and consequently protest against that luke-warm morality, that mediocrity which is content in respect of goodness with having neither poverty nor riches; He even went so far as to declare, without fear of paradox, that the publicans and sinners were nearer the kingdom of heaven, as being more disposed to entire conversion, than respectable and self-satisfied worldlings. But when men affect extraordinary sanctity, they voluntarily make themselves conspicuous, and make a good bargain of it. They separate themselves, affect singularity, pass their lives apart from the lives of common men, try to unhumanise themselves; but they often retain, alas! too large a portion of the sad heritage of which they affect to renounce the

* Matt. v. 20.

† Matt. v. 46.

form. The pride of the stoic, as has been said, may be seen through the holes in his mantle. The ordinary life which is sinful is seen through extraordinary appearances.

Jesus did exactly the contrary. In His case, it was a radiance from within, never from without, which shone upon everything around Him. He did no violence to any of the forms under which life presents itself, but He gave life to them. He did not re-arrange anything; He transfigured everything.

Life was the path to which God had directed His steps. His first act of wisdom was to accept it, the second to walk in it without hesitation or mistake. His extraordinary holiness never shone except through the most ordinary conditions of life.

You will never, for example, see Him yield to the temptation of making Himself the exclusive representative of any one class of society. And so true is this, that if you wish to represent Him in an unnatural way, you have only to assign this part to Him, which is so common among men

who propose to exert by their example or teaching a reformatory influence upon the morals of their species. He lived in poverty; He loved it; He raised its condition for the sake of the poor, whom He loved and longed to raise. He speaks with tenderness of the little ones; He loves them in proportion to the privations they have to endure; but try to make a mendicant monk of Him, or a tribune of the proletariat!

On the other hand, He did not shun the society of the rich: He lodged in the house of Lazarus, He took a meal at the house of Simon the Pharisee, He bore an admirable testimony to Zaccheus the publican; but try to make Him a patron of prosperity, or the bribed defender of the rights of the rich!

He lived in celibacy, and honoured marriage; He was a Jew, and bore testimony to the Gentiles; the most profound doctors came to consult Him, and He thanked God for having placed wisdom within reach of less cultivated minds. It was necessary that He should occupy one place in the

world and not another; He could not be at the same time rich and poor, learned and ignorant, man and woman, old man and child. But does it not appear to you as if a radiance was shed from Him on every condition of life, and you see men from them all in turn bow down before Him, and rise up endued with a new grandeur which pervades and glorifies them.

There is a prejudice against holiness which accuses it of narrowing life, and of closing the heart against the generous vibrations of nature; a saint, it is thought, is a man who constructs a cell for himself here below, and who dares not expose his delicate soul to the contact of the fresh air. This surely is a prejudice which must fall to the ground on meeting with Him whom we Christians love to consider as the model of perfect holiness. What life bloomed more freely or shed its light more profusely than His?

Shall we speak of His relations with others? Watch Him with His disciples, to whom He was at once Companion, Master, Father, Brother, and

who furnished Him at every step with the means of testing the feelings of a heart which overflowed with friendship.

I have already spoken of the unexpected and surprising grace of His manner with little children, that touchstone of true natures. What might not be said of His relations with women, that touchstone of truly pure natures? Do you know that He counted among His friends some of the chiefs of the people, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, at the same time that He was taunted with His novel and beneficent relations with publicans and sinners. Who, I ask, did He exclude from His society? Who did He despise? With whom did He find Himself ill at ease? Who was too degraded for this Being so pure, or too vulgar for this Being so noble, or too great for this Being so humble, or too insignificant for this Being so sublime?

Shall I speak of His activity? A famous sect of antiquity summed up the rules of conduct in these two words: Bear and forbear!

A noble motto, the austere severity of which our conscience salutes in passing ; but how far is it surpassed by that of the Son of Man, which might be summed up in two other words : Sanctify and diffuse thyself. It is not He who would say : " When my hand is full of truths, I will not open it." Every impulse in Him is to action. If He has not a place where to lay His head, it is because He is going incessantly from place to place to do good. The crowds which press around Him are like a land watered by His gifts, and His gifts are Himself ; He gives Himself in every form, His sympathies, His virtues, His strength, the treasures of His heart and soul. It is an open fountain, which is never dry, because it is always fed from I know not what hidden spring, which seems to possess benefits enough to submerge the world.

Shall I speak of the substance of His teaching ? It is not only His body, but His mind which wanders unceasingly amidst the various scenes of existence. What knowledge of life and

penetration are displayed in His parables, which always represent man as he is, in the most familiar as well as the most dramatic situations. He speaks but of heaven, of God, of the eternal destiny, of immortal souls; but He always speaks as a man who has seen the shepherd leading His flock to the pasture, the sower scattering the grain in the furrows, the woman making bread, the fisherman casting his nets, the father weeping over the excesses of his wandering child, or the happy celebration of wedding festivals. On the other hand, what prodigious fecundity of application in His words. Every word that falls from His lips contains a living germ of indefinite progress. He says: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and settles the basis of the distinction between two societies. He says: "Our Father, which art in heaven," and sows the seeds of universal fraternity. He speaks, and gives out, as if accidentally, the infallible programme of the only true civilisation. Kings may learn a novel policy, and the people

a new manner of associating on the stage of the world. He speaks, and at the distance of eighteen centuries His words will soften the manners of the cannibal, while at the same time they reform our old codes of laws, and transform our ancient institutions.

Finally, my brethren, consider the attitude of the Son of Man in danger. There is a twofold temptation for great minds. Some, intoxicated by their power, and actuated by an instinct more noble than prudent, seem to take a pleasure in confronting danger gratuitously.

We have a memorable example of this in one of the apostles, Peter. Simon Peter subjected himself to a trial which did not lie in his path. Now Jesus pronounced on such as he, a sentence worthy of note, when He said that "Those who take the sword shall perish with the sword." And with the precept, as in other cases, He furnished the example. Whatever consciousness He had within Him of strength to surmount temptations, you will never see Him seek or despise them beforehand.

But there is also a temptation to simplify the conditions of holiness by flying from trial. It is easy to be humble in solitude. Show me your humility amongst the crowd, alternately enthusiastic and hostile. It is easy to be good, when we can make choice of our society. Show me your goodness in the face of indifference, ingratitude, and hatred.

Now, Jesus, exempt alike from temerity and presumption, submitted to, without courting the trials of life. And whether He was spared them or not, you know. Would you not say on reviewing His short history, that in order to exhibit exceptional holiness, the elements of exceptional trial, complete without example, have been given us?

He was in temptations, my brethren, He was sifted as we are, indeed, not one of us is sifted as He was. I do not only allude to that mysterious scene which is recounted by the evangelists which presents Him to us as preluding His ministry, by a threefold and solemn victory, over the lust of

the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Enter with Him into that career which should touch so profoundly the feelings and passions of every heart. It is all trial, increasing trial, trial gradually pushed to an extreme, but always surmounted by a calm strength, master of itself, gradually so exalted as to leave on the mind the impression of Almighty power.

What a test of humility, to begin as He did, by being for a time the idol of the crowd, and to excite at last the unjust contempt of the hypocritical Pharisees. Now, review His life from the cradle at Bethlehem, to the cross at Golgotha; not only will you not find the slightest shade of self-love either encouraged or repressed, of pride or ambition, but not even the most imperceptible deviation from that unique character which caused Him to be called the Master, meek and lowly of heart. What a test of goodness to see the most generous devotion repaid by the blackest ingratitude, and instead of gratitude to meet with that hatred and cruelty which ended by glutting itself

in the sufferings on Calvary. Now, review His life again; I do not ask you whether you find the least trace of rancour or egotism, but whether in the whole world you can find a type of charity to compare with that which you have seen increasing in Him, until the hour when the trial was at its height. Always equal to His burden, even when He has the whole world upon Him, He proves to all observers that the prince of this world had indeed nothing in Him.

Now, my brethren, turn your thoughts inward for a time, and collect your impressions. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me as if something strange, unusual, something almost mysterious, must produce a prodigy before your eyes, as if you were present at a sort of transfiguration.

Consider well this career of three years, these remarkably simple events, and by degrees you will see the Son of Man come out of His frame, and grow and grow and grow, until His proportions surpass the limits not only of your experience, but

of your imagination. As for myself, I cannot desist from studying this phenomenon; it attracts, it moves, it almost fascinates me. I see at first the most inconspicuous of mortals, passing his days in the most inconspicuous conditions of life. I fix my attention on the humble figure of this carpenter going forth from His abode in the garb of a working man, gathering a few friends around Him, going from place to place by the common ways, bearing the burden of life as it is presented to Him; without ambition, without *éclat*, without success, struggling, suffering, dying. Then by degrees this envelope vanishes, and what does it leave before my eyes?—it is a spirit, but a spirit that knowing neither time nor space, suddenly fills the horizon of my thoughts, as when God said: “Let there be light, and there was light.”

Doubtless, the carpenter of Nazareth knew but three days of life upon the earth, but what does that signify? His spirit has nothing to do with the reckoning of days; and I feel that it exists from age to age, overshadowing all the generations

of men. He lives as much to-day as He did two thousand years ago, and will not be more changed in the days of our remotest posterity. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Doubtless, the carpenter of Nazareth did but cover with His shadow an imperceptible point of our globe. But what does that signify? His spirit knows no bounds, and I see Him communicating Himself to one place after another, passing the limits of states, crossing mountains and oceans, enveloping the whole earth with a new atmosphere, and I understand the words: Ye shall be witnesses unto me, unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*

Doubtless, the carpenter of Nazareth knew but one, and that the least brilliant of the ten thousand forms in which human nature is clothed. But what does that signify? His spirit is not united to any form; it is compatible with every condition; rich and poor, learned and ignorant, the aged, women and children, all are elevated by

* Acts i. 8.

Him; He reigns beneath the purple of the sovereign, just as He illumines the hut of the slave; and I understand St. Paul when he says: In Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, bond nor free.*

Doubtless, the carpenter of Nazareth only experienced some of the trials of life. But what does that signify? His spirit is equal to every contest, there is no victory beyond His powers; He will sustain the criminal who repents, and the martyr who succumbs, the child who tries to please its mother, and the mother who weeps at the tomb of her child; and I comprehend the words of the apostle: "In all these things we are more than conquerors."† "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."‡

I have searched in vain in imagination, and I can find no situation, nor time nor place nor extremity in which man may not be changed to the very depths of his being, by being clothed with that spirit which I see emanate in all its force and

* Coloss. iii. 11. † Romans viii. 37. ‡ Phil. iv. 13.

glory from the miserable envelope of the obscure career of the Son of Man on earth. Now, if this spirit is the spirit of holiness, we must conclude that Christ has given us proof of perfect holiness, for I should not call any holiness perfect which could not be attained by other men. What, then, is this spirit? To understand it thoroughly, we must carry back our thoughts to the earthly life of the Son of Man; for it was then, and at no other time, that it was manifested in its plenitude. This is the focus, the centre from which light is radiated in the world. The real, the living Christ—the Christ the Son of Man—will always be the treasure of humanity, happen what may.

Now, the trait which would first strike a superficial observer is His human charity. Some of the forms of love had been known before He came; there had been intelligent minds enamoured of truth; mothers, who lived but for their children; citizens, who died for their country; noble minds had even consecrated all their efforts to find out the supreme good, in order to give it to mankind

But this love, so sure of itself—equable, constant, universal—for which the new word charity has been created, is only truly to be seen, and has only become conscious of itself in the soul of the Son of Man; it has the value of an absolute discovery. We who have received it as a heritage since it appeared in the world, cannot fail to recognise in it the law of perfection. But let us remember that if the idea now belongs to us in all its sublimity, it is because the reality, more sublime than the idea, has been placed before our eyes. We may say that charity has two modes of expressing itself; to one we give the name of abnegation, because it forgets itself; to the other, devotion, because it gives itself. Now, consider charity as it is in Christ; you may find the form of it, but never the limit.

The limit of His abnegation! You will have found it when in any part of His life you can trace a thought of Himself—a selfish regret, a breath of pride, a spark of ambition, a trace of any self-seeking whatsoever. You can study it for your-

selves, you have the Gospels in your hands; you know how man is skilled in the ingenious art of returning to the centre, self, by a thousand feints and a thousand circumlocutions—but as for Jesus, I defy you absolutely ever to find Him in fault.

The limit of His devotion! Try to find any form of goodness which can be carried further than it was by Him. Be it compassion, when He was moved by the crowds which followed Him; beneficence, when He consoles the miserable; forgiveness, when He prays for His executioners; lenity, when He raised up the sinner, or the woman taken in adultery—holy indignation against injustice. Mercy, love of enemies, love of souls, spirit of sacrifice. Consult the Gospels again; you may search, but you will not find one.

These things cannot be demonstrated; they are felt—and it cannot be that you have not felt them. It is the inexhaustible, absolute, infinite character of His charity which constitutes the originality of the Son of Man. We may search for a few drops of it at the bottom of our own hearts, with Him

the vessel is always full to overflowing. But we will not stop at the surface, we will go to the foundations. Having discovered the course of the stream, we will go back to the source. To understand the outward man who astonishes us, let us penetrate to the inward man, and ask for His secret. The inward man did I say? Is this the language we must employ? As soon as I penetrate into the sanctuary of His soul to discover the invisible guest, I find myself arrested by an unexpected meeting. I expected to find Him alone. But it is not so. Another is with Him—always with Him. “I am not alone,” He said, in speaking of it; “when all abandon me, I shall not be alone, for he is with me.” While the earth, moved at His presence, kisses His footsteps or meditates upon His words, He holds converse within Himself with the confidant of His soul, whose invisible face He contemplates. There is a heart open to all the effusions of His heart, a mind which interprets His thoughts, a language which answers to His. It is not solitude; there

is intercourse in His inner life to such an extent, that in solemn moments, like a man thinking aloud, words escaped Him which were not intended for our ears, and which are but detached fragments of the mysterious colloquy within. "I know that thou hearest me always," He said at the grave of Lazarus; and at Gethsemane: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." And on the cross: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" You would say that there was another self, above Him, and yet equal, whom He silently addresses,—whom He loves above all, and by whom He is loved with the love that said: "We are one."

But why so much mystery, when there is nothing that seems so congenial to His heart as that of this inward intimacy to which He is pleased to confide everything. The subject is never exhausted when He explains to His disciples the ineffable relations which unite Him to the Invisible One; more living, more present, more familiar, more visible to Him than any one amongst them.

“My Father” (it is thus that He calls Him) “loveth me.” “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father.”* “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth, and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.”† “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.”‡ “My Father and I are one.”§ But I shall never have finished. Rather read the whole Gospels again for yourselves. But who, then, is this intimate friend, this ineffable confidant of His soul, this other self whom He adores—in a word, this Father? In order to explain it to you, my brethren, perhaps it will suffice to recall some occasions when Jesus does not speak of Him as His Father only, but as ours also. “When ye pray, therefore, say ‘our Father.’” It is God, then! My brethren, if there be a God, it can be but He. If man were a mere machine, a God who was a machine might

* John x. 15.

† John v. 19, 20.

‡ John iv. 34.

§ John x. 30.

perhaps suffice him ; if man were an idea, perhaps a God who was an abstraction might do for him ; but, man!—do you not feel that man is a being who thinks, who loves, who wishes, who lives. Man must have a God who understands, who loves, and directs him. Man is a solitary being, and if he is sometimes tempted to forget it, life and death are there to recall it. Give him, then, a God who lives with him, a God who is his Father! Now, this is the very foundation of the moral nature of the Son of Man, the key to His character, and to all the marvels of His manifestation ; it is that penetrating into His soul we find ourselves face to face with the true God, so much sought after, so much desired, so much misunderstood. We find Him there in all the brightness of His glory—that is to say, of His goodness. The presence of the sun is clearly seen from the least of his rays. However short and obscure may be the appearance of a Being always with God, thinking always as God thinks, loving only what God loves, having no will but the will of

God; such a being can truly say,—“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” His spirit—since we have used the expression—His spirit is the Spirit of God Himself. You will seek in vain for shadows there; it is the spirit of a perfect being.

It is from this, my brethren, that arises that incomparable harmony, which makes the figure of the Son of Man always shine with equal splendour, and renders it impossible to trace His likeness. You will observe that I have not even attempted it. We have walked round Him, we have contemplated Him, but we have not taken His likeness. Every feature that I might have delineated would have been immediately eclipsed by another no less striking. You will find every quality in Him, never what we call the defect of a quality; always the perfect reconciliation of contradictions, every virtue in equilibrium, bringing out and illuminating each other, and producing infinite reflections which defy all analysis. There is no other limit to His goodness, than the limit of goodness itself.

It is from this also that that peace arises, compared with which all other peace seems false and fictitious. Notice the contrast of it to the tumultuous passions which rage around Him. The air is troubled, He alone is calm. He may be compared to a lake, the surface of which always remains calm in spite of the storm, and which, by some unknown enchantment, continues to reflect the blue heavens amidst the commotions of nature. Just when He was about to quit His disciples; just when He had announced to them the trials that awaited them; just after having said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: they shall bring you before the judgment seats; the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service;" just when He was about to be delivered into the hands of sinful men, to be made the butt of their execrable hatred; when the fearful storm, called His passion, was already approaching,—He retreated into Himself, sounded the depths of the peace within, and finding it infinite, with the same voice that calmed the

tempest, He addressed to them these parting words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled!"* How grand this figure is, my brethren, how holy, how pure! How every conscience is arrested and trembles before Him.

I am seeking for a point whence we can have a last look before leaving Him. But do not fear that I shall disparage others in order to aggrandise Him. Far from it. If you wish to contemplate the monarch of our mountains in all His glory, you quit the valley, you ascend the slopes of the Jura, and the higher you rise the better you will see the gilded summit of the king, triumphantly elevated and isolated in his sublime majesty. Then when you have attained the most elevated spot, you will say—"This is the place, let us stay here."

I also will quit the flat country where the crowd is moving, and seek the heights. I will draw

* John xiv. 27.

near to some of those great and noble minds, whose names are preserved among men with just respect; and, struck with their beauty, I begin to love and admire them enthusiastically. Then I make choice among them. I pause before two or three of the most illustrious, amongst whom I distinguish one that attracts me the most. It is the sage of Greece, the master of Plato. There is something in this man, who spent seventy years in struggling with a rebel nature, whose conscience served him as a law, and who with a most unprepossessing exterior, subjugated a people enamoured of beauty, solely by the beauty of his mind; there is something which speaks to my heart; I should like to have known him, to have told him that I loved him. I will go straight to him, and, seated at his feet, with so many noble disciples on the steps of the Prytaneum, I say to myself, this is the place for contemplating the form of the Holy One and the Just. O Socrates! why wast thou not born five centuries later, that I might direct thy steps as well as my own towards this

unique model of greatness and peace. How would'st thou, who groaned during thy life-time on account of thy miseries and imperfections, have contained thy admiration in the presence of this perfect Being, in the presence of man, such as He is in God, with God, and in the likeness of God?

Thou who despaired of success in thy noble design, so nobly pursued, of reforming the morals of a handful of thy contemporaries, what would'st thou have said when this Spirit was presented to thy mind—the repairer of all breaches, radiating light from His heart as from an inextinguishable focus, to penetrate all hearts, and to transform them from glory to glory into the likeness of His adorable image? Ah! would not thy knees have bent, as one day the knees of all will bend before Him, who does not cease to draw all men unto Him?

And we, my brethren, who have known Him so long, but have perhaps misunderstood Him, will not our eyes be opened? Shall we refuse

Him the homage He demands? The homage He demands is the homage of our hearts, which He will glorify and sanctify by His spirit. He is a man; let us not forget this. What is His is ours. His greatness, His holiness, His peace is ours, as His God is ours. It is for us to raise ourselves to the fulness of the stature of Jesus Christ. This is the glorious calling of the Christian, by the twofold work of faith and regeneration. Amen!





III.

The Man of Sorrows.

“A Man of Sorrows.”—*Isaiah* liii. 3.

IMAGINE, my brethren, the days of the Son of Man flowing calmly on in the course of a happy existence; imagine Him culling the flowers of life along His path, quenching His thirst at every spring, reposing in the shade, and attaining at last the hoary summits of old age, only to behold His sun set in glory at the end of a cloudless day—you will have annihilated Him. You will have made Him but share the common lot, and at the same time you will have deprived Him of all His rights and titles. Although He

might cry: "Look unto me," henceforth no one would deign to turn round to ask who He is.

Having claimed righteousness, perfect righteousness, for His character, to-day, by a natural transition, we shall claim suffering as His destiny, and we will say at once, the perfection of suffering.

If no man can say to Him: "I am better than Thou," neither must any man be able to say to Him: "I have suffered more than Thou hast."

If you reflect a moment, you will soon see that these two requirements have more relation to each other than at first sight appears. When sin appeared upon earth, God immediately drew sorrow out of His treasures. With a wisdom which transcends our thoughts, He gave it a double end. He first, doubtless, made it the wages of sin, but He afterwards made a crown of it, to adorn the head of humiliated righteousness. I know not what would have replaced it in an abode of innocence. I know not what halo might have shone resplendent around perfect holiness there. But this I do know, that in a world where

evil reigns, it is from the hands of suffering that holiness receives her supreme consecration; so much so, that if it ever attains the highest exaltation it will only be by being crucified.

This was so well understood by the sages of antiquity, that Plato, wishing to represent righteousness incarnate in a truly holy man, expressed himself in these terms: "Let him be despoiled of everything, even of the semblance of righteousness, and only righteousness itself be left him. Irreproachable, let him be suspected of every crime. Let us test his virtue. I would expose him to infamy and its torments. But let him walk with a firm step to the tomb, encompassed by false accusations, yet still virtuous. Let him be beaten with rods, subjected to chains and torture, and after having endured all these sufferings, let him expire at last upon a cross."

Thus does the conscience of mankind express itself by the organ of genius. It demands that the Holy One and the Just shall be baptized by the name of the "Man of Sorrows."

And this programme, drawn up by a heathen four centuries before Christ, corresponds so well with His history, that, called upon in this third discourse to show you the greatness of the Son of Man by the greatness of His sufferings, I am almost tempted to take it for the basis of my discourse, and, with your permission, to preach upon a text from Plato.

You will agree that this will be to conform strictly to the spirit of these discourses, in which I undertake to glorify my Saviour by showing you the perfection of His works simply by the perfection of His humanity. Only the execution will surpass the programme, and do not be surprised at this; for to this accumulation of ills which the Athenian philosopher has heaped upon the head of his righteous man, to subject him to a decisive trial, one thing is wanting.

He has given free scope to his imagination in inventing the most atrocious situations, he has created tortures and monsters to load him with suffering; but he could not add the final touch

to what He really suffered who was to be made perfect through suffering. The Spirit of God alone could predict what Christ must needs suffer.

Nevertheless, let us borrow three traits from the remarkable picture which I have just shown you, and we shall see how absolutely they were realised, and in a way impossible to be foreseen, in the tragic history of the Son of Man.

Plato proposes that his righteous man should be despoiled of everything, in order that his virtue alone should appear.

He proposes that he should be the victim of a furious persecution, unjust and victorious, in order that his virtue may be brought out in most striking contrast. He proposes that he should be subjected to infamy and its torments, doubtless in order that his triumphant virtue may efface the infamy; in other words, expiate it by submitting to its tortures.

There certainly is in this a threefold trial which constitute a complete proof. And in conducting

the enquiry, the solemnity of which you will admit, we shall rapidly review the career of the Son of Man, to assure ourselves that He really did suffer all those things which it was necessary that He should suffer.

The first point is that He should be despoiled of everything.

Following the plan I have laid down, I shall not mention that greatest of all deprivations which contains the germ of all the rest, and which is expressed by St. Paul in the words: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."* We take no account of that voluntary deprivation which is called the incarnation.

He is a man, and must accept humanity, pure and simple, as the point of departure. The destitution of Bethlehem is only the sign by

* Phil. ii. 6, 7.

which we know Him. "And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."* Neither will I speak of His childhood passed in deprivation and obscurity. But there must often have been a painful contrast between His aspirations and the obtuseness of those around Him.

The first time that He spoke to Joseph and Mary of the occupation with His Father's business which began to engross His mind, the Evangelist tells us that they understood Him not.

How often must He have been conscious of that absolute isolation to which His thoughts condemned Him, in the midst of His relations! What a travail there must have been in His soul, bearing upon the question of His life, without its being possible that any one should, I do not say guide, but even comprehend Him! But the obscurity of Nazareth was only a preparation for Him, and it really seems as if He was subjected to it for thirty years in order to

* Luke ii. 12.

give His name the infallible opprobrium of an unfortunate origin. Woe to him who comes from a place with a bad name! Woe to Him who comes from Nazareth!

It appears as if He was to be despoiled of everything on His entrance into life, that would have created an impression in His favour.

Search around Him for any spot that is not devastated; search in His life, I do not say for anything superfluous, but the bare necessities of earthly happiness which are spared to the most desolate. That hearth where the poorest of the poor finds consolation for the desolation without. I will explain my meaning.

To understand the deprivation of the Son of Man, we must cast aside all ordinary notions of riches and greatness, and begin by getting rid of "that illusion about apparent good, of that foolish and ridiculous belief that exists in every heart, that happiness consists in those external things which we call honour, riches, and pleasure." It is from Bossuet that I quote. He says again:

“Man finds himself so shut up and limited, that his pride is mortified at finding himself confined to such narrow limits; so as he can add neither to his height nor bulk, he tries to satisfy his vain imagination of greatness by amassing as much as he can around him. He fancies, so to speak, that he incorporates with himself all the riches that he acquires.”

This is what causes us to be specially affected by privation of earthly possessions, and which leads us to think that the earthly deprivation of the Son of Man consisted in His poverty. It is affecting to think that He had neither patrimony nor property, nor provision for the future, and that His condition was that which we consider so pitiable among the poor.

But He who reminded His disciples how God feedeth the birds of the air, and clotheth the grass of the field, and who added, with divine wisdom: “Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek;”* He who taught them to ask

* Matt. vi, 31, 32.

day by day their daily bread, had other ideas than ours, and it would be doing Him injustice to count among the number of His sorrows and privations the absence of those luxuries of well-being with which we encumber our existence.

But, besides this, is there not a satisfaction in our daily bread, a natural and legitimate compensation for the fatigues of life, which seems denied to no one here below? The labourer who gains his bread by the sweat of his brow, finds his wife and children around his miserable hearth after his daily toil; his countenance brightens, his heart expands, all his being relaxes. He reposes for a time by the side of his rough path under the shadow which God has prepared for him. He has his cup of cold water in the desert of life. The man who devotes himself to the noble labours of the mind, is consoled for sorrow and illusion by being absorbed in meditation. The storm rages without; his fields are devastated, his hopes destroyed; but he enters into his study as into a sanctuary, and having made an effort to

absorb himself in his favourite studies, he forgets the whole world, forgets himself, and succeeds in cheating his heart by the austere satisfactions of the mind. He has a place where to lay his head.

Look where you will among human lives, and show me one man who has not his secret resource, his retreat, his last resort, if you will; some spot or other where he can find rest for the sole of his foot.

We are all something like the dove after the flood had devastated the earth, and who had to find a new resting-place. But it need not be that she find again the fragrant bowers which were formerly her predilection. A point of rock, a branch, a ruin is enough for her to rest her wing. We should have to enter into the details of a humiliating and melancholy vulgarity to explain, what in default of other things may suffice as a solace for the mind of man in this vale of tears. But high or low, broad or narrow, noble or vulgar, whatever it be, you will not find any solace in the life of the Son of Man.

He sat at the tables of the rich, He entered many hospitable abodes, the towns and villages opened their gates to Him, nature herself was transformed into a palace to lodge Him, and a table to feed Him; but retreat in the true sense of the word, a solace for His soul He had not. And this is what He meant when He said with a deeper meaning than at first appears: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."*

And why was this, my brethren? For a very simple reason; because the pre-occupation of His mind did not permit Him to think of earthly things. The work to which He devoted Himself was incompatible with any of the refreshments of our pilgrimage. Domestic joys, artistic culture, profound study, every solace which we have in our lives, would have been for Him a distraction and a defection. It was necessary that He should sacrifice everything, and He did sacrifice everything.

* Matt. viii. 20.

But His disciples, you will say. After all, is not the best solace that man can find on earth, the affection of His fellow men? To be understood, to feel that another is sharing with you the weight of the thought which oppresses you. Oh, what a relief. It is not essential, as you know, that sympathy should come from above; it is the charm of this admirable consoler, that the weakest can offer it to the greatest and the strongest. Had not Jesus the Twelve? Doubtless. But when did they touch His burden with one of their fingers? "God forbid!" they exclaimed in astonishment.

The Twelve with their carnal hopes, their dreams so *naïve* that they excite a smile; the Twelve who disputed about the first places in some imaginary kingdom; the Twelve who, until a long time afterwards, did not understand that He was preparing them for the future.

During His life it was He who supported them, and He never knew what it was to rest upon them. Once only He called upon them to watch

and pray with Him; you will remember it was in Gethsemane. His human heart thirsted for human sympathy, distant, imperfect as it might be. Three times, counting upon them, He found them sleeping on His pillow of agony. Troubled, disconcerted, by the little that they had seen and heard, they felt nothing but insurmountable fatigue; a striking testimony to the absolute isolation in which, in the depths of His soul, the Son of Man had always felt Himself amongst them. No, if He had no place where to lay His head, neither was there any heart on which His heart could repose.

But hope, you will say again, hope is also a solace for man. It is the consolation of those who have no other. Could not Jesus console Himself for the afflictions that He endured, by the prospect of the satisfaction to which they tended? Humanly speaking, the contrary was the case. All the power of foresight that He possessed, could only disclose to Him in the future, deceit, darkness, and catastrophe.

The Son of Man has been represented as sustained at first by enthusiasm, and embittered at last by dis-illusion. This is a profound and twofold error, which gratuitously ascribes our weakness to Him, and it cannot be sustained by facts for a moment. Is it possible that He, who knew the hearts and prejudices of the people so well, could have looked for temporal success; that He could have imagined a triumph, an achievement of His work, in which He could have reposed in peace before His death? Do you not feel that this would be to make a puerile visionary of Him, a dreamer from the other world? No. He knew well, and no one knew it so well as He, that humanly speaking, His enterprise was a desperate one. He knew that He should find insurmountable obstacles. He knew that the chiefs of the people would be against Him, that the inconstant populace would forsake Him, that His disciples would abandon Him, that His enemies would get the advantage of Him, and would one day load Him with the

double weight of their contempt and hatred. Will you hear from His own lips the expression of His hopes? "The good shepherd," He said, "giveth his life for the sheep."* "Except a corn of wheat fall unto the ground and die, it abideth alone."† "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, and they shall kill him."‡

These were the prospects with which His soul was nourished. While His disciples at His side were dreaming of crowns, He saw more and more plainly a cross preparing for Him. His hour (every man is expecting the golden hour, which may or may not come, but the hope of which sustains him nevertheless), you know what Jesus called His hour—His hour, towards which He had marched with a firm and unhesitating step, arrived at last. All that He had foreseen, all the solitude and sorrow that He had scented afar off, was suddenly realised.

He could, doubtless, if He had wished it, have made a place for Himself upon the earth, He

* John x. 11.

† John xii. 24.

‡ Matt. xvii. 22, 23.

might have established Himself as other men establish themselves in life. Imagination calls up a thousand tranquil destinies, approved, protected, rich in sweet affection, in legitimate satisfaction, honours perhaps, that a moment of hesitation might have opened to Him. He renounced them all; He was destitute of everything. It makes one giddy to see Him alone on those solitary heights. We cry out in despair when the world seems desolate, and the future closes before us. But what are our most desperate situations compared with His?

Poor, sick, mourners, all you who are disheartened and disinherited, come and count your riches in comparison with the destitution of the Son of Man. Look well around Him. What remains to Him? His soul, certainly, His soul intact, His holiness (of which I tried in vain the other day to give you a faint idea), but His soul absolutely stripped of everything in order that it might appear before us clothed with His righteousness alone.

Still all this is what I call the negative side of the sufferings of the Son of Man. It is simply that He did not possess earthly happiness. To what blows, to what external storms was He exposed?

Sooner or later, everyone here below is called to measure himself with adversity. Our first steps in the path of life lead us into an enemy's country. We no sooner open our eyes in the world than hostilities begin. We fall into snares, we are hemmed in on every side. One is struck down on our right hand, another on our left. It is impossible to retrace our steps, we must go on. Soon all around us are wounded, languishing, dying. And what an infinite variety of wounds, O my companions in suffering! if you were to recount your own and those which you see around you. Who has not a sad lugubrious story to tell, too often that of his own life. Wealth destroyed, hearts wounded, physical pain, moral suffering, sword thrusts, envenomed stings, lives struck down by the thunder-bolt, broken by the

storm, gnawed at the heart by a destroying worm!

Among all the woes to which we are exposed, from which we are suffering to-day, or may be to-morrow, which can aspire to be compared with His? Everyone brings his own grief here, no doubt, thinking it the greatest. You will agree that no one could be subjected to all at once. But here is sorrow, if you consider it well, that unites in itself the bitterest woes; that which Plato selected, as possessing so complete and absolute a character that it leaves nothing to be desired. We shall see Him exposed to the most unjust, cruel, triumphant persecution, seasoned by the blackest treason, accompanied by the most atrocious circumstances, crowned by the greatest outrages during the horrors of the final sufferings. And to add the last drop to the bitterness of this cup, it was necessary that by the very benefits He conferred, He should make Himself in some sort the artificer of His own calamities. It is quite in order that the sins of

the wicked should fall upon their own heads, and bring about the tragic results of their career of vice. But this is a new result of a beneficent life. This time it is the treasures of mercy itself, prodigally showered around Him by the Holy One and the Just, which are gathered together in the heavens in a fearful storm of vengeance and blood. Behold this Sower who goes on His way, spreading abroad compassion, health, and consolation, in order to see suspicion, calumny, treason, and cruelty arising around Him. Soon this harvest will grow and stifle Him. Indefatigable benefactor, He will perish, crushed by the weight of His own benefits; the messenger of salvation, crucified by the hands of those whom He snatches from perdition. Shall I relate this history to you? Before undertaking it, there is one thought to which I cannot refrain from drawing your attention. Nothing is arbitrary in the history of the Son of Man; everything in it reveals a profound logic, which illuminates every portion of the field of truth. It has been

asked, whether this disease, which has so eaten into the vitals of humanity that it is impossible to contest its presence, whether sin is really as we proclaim it to be, a revolt against the laws of goodness; if it is a fact that the creature has wandered from the right path, and is in a state of permanent revolt against the will of the Creator, or whether sin may not be regarded as a simple imperfection, necessary but transitory, from which man may aspire to rid himself by a judicious exercise of his own powers; a sort of twilight between the impenetrable darkness of the past, and the full light of day towards which, with slow but sure steps, he is advancing. It has been asked, whether it is necessary to have recourse to all this process of sacrifice, redemption, and regeneration, to reconcile man with his God. Reconcile! Ah! who says that he is not already reconciled. Let us leave these hard words alone. Let us take things more simply. Let us have a little regard to the weakness and frailty of the creature, give him a pattern, a support, lend him

a hand, shew him the end of the way, and you will see with what a firm and joyous step he will pursue that noble path which leads to perfection.

Here then is the pattern. What do you say to it? It is the Holy One and the Just. People will surely assemble around Him, applaud and follow Him. First, those most advanced in the path of morality, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the doctors of the law, who in their turn will draw others after them, down to the lowest scale of the ladder. If there is any hesitation at first, He will be more beloved and respected as He becomes better known. It is but truth and progress that men are seeking; we must look for ever-increasing enthusiasm and adhesion to Him. They will transport Him from Galilee to Jerusalem in order to make the light more conspicuous, and there no doubt they will enthrone Him.

I appeal to every candid man, to every well-constituted mind, is not this the course things ought to have taken, and which it seemed as if they must inevitably take? Explain, then, how

it was that precisely the contrary took place? Explain how it was that when light came into the world, it was not received? Explain how it was that in proportion as the perfection of the model was recognised, He was left alone, and the more He convinced all hearts, the higher did the flood of persecution arise to engulf Him. Explain how it was that they finally crucified the Holy One and the Just, instead of adoring Him. It is not a fact suspended as it were in the air, there must be a cause for it. And what was this cause, if it was not a revolt of the heart, which would not be troubled, as it walked in the ways of perdition, until it was broken, changed and brought back by the power of God unto salvation.

We will put the spirit of the Holy One and the Just to the test, by observing how He bore the most unjust persecution. In order that this dispensation should be complete, it was necessary that it should begin by the contrary. Thus, you see, that at first, the Son of Man was approved.

John the Baptist, the revered prophet, bore witness to Him. "This is he," he cried, "of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."* Some sincere disciples attached themselves to Him, and left all to follow Him. His first journeys in Galilee seem only to presage an easy triumph. Multitudes, touched by the benefits He conferred, and thirsting for His words, assembled around Him. Even those who felt the first symptoms of resistance arising in their hearts, agreed that never man spake like this man; and if they threatened more than once to suffocate Him, it was only with *empressement* and enthusiasm; the multitudes once even concerted to proclaim Him king, and He only escaped a veritable ovation by hiding Himself and withdrawing, to pass long hours in prayer alone on a mountain.

But soon one group grew cool and forsook Him; then another and another; a camp of adversaries, or rather of conspirators, was formed

* John i. 27, 30.

against Him; it increased daily; the crowd of admirers vanished, and was gradually succeeded by the exasperated crowd of His executioners.

We will observe them as they pass one after the other; it is quite a *cortège*.

The Pharisees at the head—you know why; they are the *élite* of the nation, the leaders of opinion. They take umbrage at this new comer; and, being types of self-righteousness incarnate, they feel their pride especially condemned and their hypocrisy unmasked by the implacable sincerity of the meek and lowly Master. Despairing of attaching Him to their ranks, they combine to crush Him with the cold cruelty of a party against an individual, and the concentrated rage of the strong against the weak. Wherever they meet Him, war is declared—war to the death, and without quarter. Afterwards come the Sadducees—the materialists of that age—the men of pleasure, the sceptics of loose morals. They form an unnatural alliance with the fanatics and insincere devotees to annihilate their common enemy; for

He came to interfere with their comfortable philosophy and their voluptuous lives, by speaking to them of judgment and justice, while He displayed the accusing light of true holiness before their eyes. After these come the rich, the chief men, the people of importance, who see themselves placed by Him in the alternative of renouncing either themselves or the kingdom of heaven. At first they withdrew in sadness, like the young man in the Gospel, but returned furious and exasperated against Him who told them the parable of Lazarus and the wicked rich man, and who thought more of the widow's mite than of their ostentatious charity. Every class of the nation took part against Him, one after the other. Even among the common people whom He loved so much, among whom He lived, as belonging to their ranks, to whom He spoke His most tender words, and whom He loaded with His richest benefits; the people—the family, as it were—prepared to receive great characters, but changeable and fickle, impulsive both in enthusiasm and

hatred, going to extremes both in its cruelties and its favours—there were those even among the people, who, after making Him one day their idol, turned against Him the next, to heap the most wicked outrages upon Him, and with the blindest fury to demand His death.

All is now ready. The victim is prepared. He has to face the world, which is risen up against Him, alone. Observe the organisation of the conspiracy; follow its dark doings; listen to its murmurs. The last scene is approaching. The hour is come; He says so Himself. Irreproachable, let Him be suspected of every crime. Let Him walk with a firm step to the tomb encompassed by false accusations, but still virtuous!

What is the Son of Man doing? On His knees in a garden of olives, during the shades of night, He waits in prayer. It is in this attitude that the fury of His enemies will surprise Him. The disciples whom He asked to watch with Him one hour are asleep, before flying like sheep from the wolf. One alone watches; Judas—he who will

give the signal by a kiss, which is a greater outrage than the spitting in the judgment hall.

He is assailed by men armed with staves. He submits like a lamb led to the slaughter. Even those who come to take Him are struck by His gentleness. They hesitate a moment, then return like a flood; rush upon Him, bind Him, drag Him away, and make Him walk to the palace of the High Priest. When there—let us veil our faces my brethren—oh! scenes of shame and infamy, too often presented to us, but never enough pondered in the silence of our hearts. Oh! the height of wickedness, cowardice, and blindness. Oh! spectacle of horror, such as has never since been seen, doubtless because so much of strength and meekness, of grandeur and peace, have never since been seen, as were displayed in those dark depths. Humanity undertook for once to give an example of its infamy, in order to bring out the unexampled sublimity of the virtue of the Son of Man.

Now, then, you who have your part to play in this scene, assemble together from the four winds

of heaven—Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, kings and priests, senators and servants, soldiers of the Pretorium, the dregs of the people, villains condemned to execution, cowardice, treason, hypocrisy, cruelty, all the monsters to which sin has given birth; bring hither your sarcasms and instruments of torture, come and cast every one your stone and your insult at the Holy Victim; strike Him and mock Him, throw yourselves at His feet, and spit in His face; study to multiply His sufferings, to complicate and refine them, exclude every possible amelioration, add torture to torture; let Him not be crucified until He has been scourged; let Him not suffer the treatment of slaves, until He has been condemned as more infamous than the worst malefactor; add the sting of irony to your cruelty; pierce His heart at the same time that you pierce His shuddering flesh; in your looks and words let Him taste a gall more bitter than that with which you moisten His dying lips; heap upon His head such an accumulation of tortures, that at length the earth trembles and the

sun veils its face in horror; you will not succeed in exciting in His loving heart anything more than fresh depths of meekness and peace; not a complaint, never a word of discouragement, never a trace of bitterness, never the shudder of restrained anger; never any other answer to your atrocious provocations; never anything but the unsurpassable expression of charity: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Do you know anything of the heart of man, my brethren? It is a den of lions. They often slumber, but when pain awakes them, though the doors may be closed, the prolonged echo of their groans may be heard from afar. Suffering never awakened anything in the heart of the Son of Man but what the Scriptures in their expressive language so admirably call the Lamb of God.

We have as yet only presented what I will call the exterior side of the sufferings of the Son of Man. It remains to penetrate, if possible, into the interior, to consider another aspect, and this

time the real aspect of what has been so well called His passion.

The first thing to be said is, that all that we have seen heretofore is as nothing compared with what remains to be contemplated. This complete desolation, this cruel persecution, this attack on a defenceless victim by hatred and passion, the suffering upon the cross, of which I have not even tried to depict the horrors, all this is but the frame of the picture, not the picture itself. The bodily pain, great as it was, was but an envelope; it is in the mental torture that we must seek for the essence, the real cause of His sufferings.

Experience has doubtless taught you that it is in our hearts that we suffer the most. There is a limit to physical pain. It does not seem as if there were any to mental pain. The body dies, when the measure is full. There is an undying part of us, which is capable of enduring suffering without being able to see the depth or the limit of it.

A martyr in early times, threatened with the most frightful tortures, answered calmly: "Threaten me, then, with something more terrible, for as for tortures they can but lead me to death, which I await as a blessing." Did not Jesus say Himself: "Fear not them which kill the body?" We all hold this in the main. And it is not one of the least signs of our greatness, that it gives us a glimpse of sufferings infinitely greater than those which come to us from without, through the medium of the senses. Man is so constituted that he can sing for joy on a funeral pile, and shed burning tears in the abodes of opulence; and by a contradiction which has its mysterious aspect, the greater the mind, the deeper the abyss into which it may fall. The power of suffering being thus a standard of the power of loving. If, then, you recur to the Son of Man, you will easily understand how it was that His mental sufferings were greater than those of any other man.

We will pass over the poignant details which

present themselves at every step in the path of the passion—the sleep of the disciples, the kiss of Judas, the denial of Peter, the farewell to His mother. These are but the thorns of the crown. Let us go to the centre, and fix our attention on the suffering which crowns all the rest; that which Plato seems to have vaguely foreseen, when he says of his ideal righteous man: “I would expose him to infamy and its tortures;” and which Holy Scripture, in its language of divine boldness and exact precision, expresses in these terms: “He was made sin for us who knew no sin.”* “Who his own self bare our sins.”† “Being made a curse for us.”‡

Rest assured, my brethren, that I shall not attempt to explain a mystery to you, of which the angels themselves can but, as it were, approach the edge. We do not understand it, but we may, nevertheless, gain instruction in our efforts to comprehend it. We are on the edge of an abyss. I am trying to find a path which

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † 1 Peter ii. 24. ‡ Galatians iii. 13.

will lead us, not to the bottom, but from which we can look down into the depths.

You are acquainted with sympathy—that virtue which lightens mental burdens, and relieves those who are in danger of succumbing, by transferring the load to those who love them. It enters into the number of our sufferings, but only in exact proportion to our love, and this explains at once, why it generally forms so small a proportion of them, and why it represents immeasurable suffering in the case of the Son of Man. If we come in contact with a profoundly miserable being, our hearts immediately bleed with his; but such is the marvellous elasticity of our egotism, that even at the moment when we feel most keenly, we are inwardly consoled by the thought, that, after all, it does not affect us, and that as soon as we have turned away, other objects will arise to absorb us and to divert our minds from painful impressions. We remain so short a time under the weight of the sufferings of others, and dispose so lightly and naturally

of the burden, that it was once said that a mind was only sympathetic by reason of and in proportion to its mobility. Our sympathies are alms offered in passing, precious alms no doubt; let us not despise them, what have we better to give or to receive? But they are far indeed from that gift of sacrifice, that permanent gift of self, the realisation of a true substitution.

We must imagine a mind really perfect and absolutely deprived of all consolation. We must imagine sympathy at work, without any possible counterpoise of egotism, lightness, or lassitude. Does it not appear to you that such a mind will become the focus in which all griefs, whether real or imaginary, will be accumulated, condensed, and concentrated?

O my Saviour! when I see Thee troubled in spirit when Thou lookest upon one of those crowds, the sight alone of which recalls to Thy mind the infinitely varied sorrows of so many other crowds; when I see Thy eyes fill with tears at the grave of Lazarus, because it recalls

to Thee the tears shed by so many others at other graves; when on the way to the cross I hear Thy voice betraying compassion for the griefs of those who lament for Thee, I comprehend those words of the prophet, so profound even in their simplicity: "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."*

It is in this especially, that the fundamental difference is shown between our sympathies and those of the Son of Man. Because we are not ourselves holy, we fear to compromise and condemn ourselves in some sort, by a commiseration which descends to the impure source whence human misery flows. We pity the unfortunate; we repulse the sinner; we do not wish to have anything to do with him.

But in the case of Him who knew no sin, you will feel that we may especially reckon upon His sympathy with the degraded human soul, given up as a prey to its foul and cruel adver-

* Isaiah liii. 3, 4.

saries. We may reckon upon His sympathy with death and curse, the wages of sin. We must see Him bearing our sins and tasting the curse. To bear the sins of others and taste the curse of them; the very idea is revolting! And yet is it not from such experiences of life that we learn the tortures suffered by bruised and broken hearts, which are enough to make even the most callous shudder?

Look at that old man whose noble head appears to be crowned with shame, and whose back is bent as if loaded with an invisible but intolerable burden. You do not venture to ask him the cause of his sorrow, and you do well. He has, as it were, death in his soul, and within this body, half consumed with tears and sighs, he bears this inexpressible grief—the sins of a prodigal son.

Feeble and incomplete image, as far removed from the truth as we ourselves are removed from perfection. Thou, O man! art the true prodigal son, in the infinite variety of the paths thou takest to perdition. The real broken heart is

Thine, O Jesus! Saint of saints, the Beloved of God, who bearest in Thy human breast the heart of our Father.

Consider how in proportion, as He became acquainted with life, the abysses of the bottomless pit of the miseries of sin were gradually revealed to Him. I have just depicted to you the conspiracy of His enemies as it was insensibly formed around Him, how it then became general, burst in a howling tempest, and nailed Him to a cross. Here is another conspiracy a thousand times more formidable, the conspiracy of hell, which is formed by degrees, increases, assumes infinite proportions, then bursts with indescribable fury. The innocent (why should we not henceforth give it its true name?) the divine soul of the Son of Man, has met successively in the path of life, shame and baseness in sinners, and men of evil lives, voluptuousness in the woman who was a sinner, and the woman taken in adultery, hypocrisy, pride, and self-righteousness among the Pharisees, perfidy in Judas, blindness and cruelty among the

populace. The monster sin thus came by degrees out of his abyss; he also became 'incarnate in human form, in order to present himself before the immaculate conscience of the Son of Man.

A moment arrived when they met and recognised each other. What a moment! All is silence. One would think that heaven and earth would be suddenly depopulated to leave all space for these two adversaries. I only see face to face the man of salvation and the man of the fall, the first and second Adam. But why do I speak of them as adversaries? Are they not rather two brothers, who meet once more. Let not the insensate fury of the one blind us for an instant to the infinite compassion of the other. It is thyself, my brother. It is thyself in this mire and darkness, torn with passion and pain, lost, cursed, cursing and crucifying thy own image. Oh, what a lamentable history is thine; a past of shame, a future of darkness, bitter reminiscences of lost innocence, the first errors followed so promptly by a chain of irreparable consequences; the pearl of

great price trampled in the mud; every passion unchained, a flood of suffering of every sort, remorse, fear, bondage, pangs of death, and dread of curse. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."*

You see Him stand, not hesitating, but as if Himself dismayed at the travail of His soul and the fruit of His love.

It is night in Gethsemane.

All the bitterness that can be distilled from sin pervades His spirit, like a potion of which He is not willing to lose a drop.

It is the hour of mystery, before which every conscience is arrested, and, in its trouble, feels impelled to throw its burden on to the head of a holy victim. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."† As Thou wilt, that is to say that I offer my soul as an oblation; as Thou wilt, that is to say that I submit if it must be; let me bear the burden of my brother. He is silent. The silence

* Matt. xxvi. 38.

† Matt. xxvi. 39.

is prolonged. The chill of death congeals the blood in His veins. He is "exposed to infamy and its torments."

His limbs are covered with sweat, not like ours; the sweat of His brow was like that of His heart, which was breaking. Great drops of blood were seen upon Him when He arose, calm and victorious, to walk to the sacrifice.

Let them immolate Him now! Let them load Him with insult and curses! Let them insult even His righteousness. It is not He, it is ourselves, it is sin! He must die, He feels it, He must and will. Some few sighs escape His lips: "I thirst;" "My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me?"

Then, "It is finished!" The heavens are veiled, the earth trembles, He bows His head, He succumbs, He expires!

The Son of Man is dead! Dead of our death! dead of that mysterious annihilation which leaves nothing of us on earth but a corpse; but at the

same time of a violent death, the result of His work and the result of His righteousness. It was necessary that He should die, and that He should die in an extraordinary manner, that He should die of death.

Mark well that death does not appear to be in His case, what it inevitably is in ours—the accidental or natural term of our condemned existence, a surprise of weakness, a final and irrecoverable failure of strength. His death is a dispensation, so closely united to all the exigencies of His idea, of the part He played, of His person itself, that it is clothed with a unique and truly touching character. In the combination of circumstances in which it took place, it comes before us in these apparently contradictory terms, but for the truth of which there is irrefragable proof: the wages of sin necessarily paid to the hero of righteousness, and by Him willingly accepted.

That which with us is necessary *par excellence*, was with Him a spontaneous act, voluntary *par*

excellence, and that which with us is the ripe fruit of condemnation, in His case appears to me to be the flower of righteousness in its fullest bloom for the first time. Jesus did not die so much because He was a man, as because He was holy; but, because He was holy, He died in such a way that He only among men could say: "I lay down my life, no man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down."*

Try to imagine the Son of Man by some means escaping from this twofold condition, of a death voluntary, yet necessary, flavoured with all the bitterness of sin, and at the same time absolutely holy, and you will have taken away His crown.

Imperfect or weak, one or the other, or like us struck unawares by death, He would not have known the depth of our misery, or having seen it would have turned away without descending into it. In either case, He would not have been raised above the common lot, He would have been absorbed and lost in the mass of men; He would

* John x. 17, 18.

not have illumined our dark abyss; He would have left to suffering all its problems, and to death the dread name of the King of Terrors.

We thus perceive a new, unique, and absolute sense in which it may be said, that it was necessary that Christ should die. And I will conclude by saying (however strange this proposition may sound), that in a world like ours, a death like His, was nothing less than the very crowning act of His perfection, and the supreme consummation of His plan of redemption.

Let us not explain any farther, my brethren. Let us fall on our knees and adore Him.

To this mystery of the holy compassion of our God, the intellect may take exception, but the heart, the conscience, and the soul exclaim with holy ecstasy in the language of the psalmist: Righteousness and peace have met together, mercy and truth have kissed each other! *
“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!” †

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

† Psalm xxxii. 1.

But there is another result, new and unexpected, of this tragic end of the Son of Man; it is that in thus dying, He draws us after Him. If He henceforth shows us the way of salvation, it is only by leading us to death. All that we have previously said culminates in this. And if, in my previous discourses, I have abstained from practical applications, it is that I have left them for this point, which resumes and embraces all the others.

According to the measure in which we enter into the ideas of the Son of Man, according to the measure in which we partake of His holiness, according as we comprehend the sublimity and the self-denial of His sacrifice, in that proportion do we condemn ourselves to death with Him, to a conscious death, at once necessary and voluntary, holy and yet crucified. A Christian is, in fact, but the dying disciple of a Master who does but teach him to die.

This is self-evident, no doubt; all the logic of the life of the Son of Man, with transparent and

majestic unity, conducts Him straight to death. If we approach Him, we must be on our guard. This logic will seize us, will surround us with its irresistible force, and conclude with us as it did with Him. But if my reasoning has left you incredulous, if you want other proof, you have but to open the Gospels. What does Jesus Christ say? If any man will deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow me.* What does that signify? What do the apostles say? "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps."† "If one died for all then were all dead."‡ To be crucified with Christ, to partake of His suffering, to be made conformable unto His death: what does this signify? To repent, to deny ourselves, to give our lives, to be weaned from earthly things, to groan being burdened, to desire to depart; what does all this signify, if not to die, to die with Christ Himself, who died first to teach us to die?

* Matt. xvi. 24.

† 1 Peter ii. 21.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

But does it all end here? Is death the end of all, of the Gospel as well as of the rest? And the Son of Man, like a Prince of death, did He only appear amongst us, did He only attract the human race to His feet, to draw them more quickly with Himself into the depths of the abyss.

My brethren, this would be the meaning of His life, and the end of His work, without the fundamental fact of the resurrection, which will occupy us in the next discourse.

I have examined it with care, and have confirmed the evidence of it for myself. If I had not found it firm and irrefragable, God is my witness that I would to-day finish my interviews with you, by saying as St. Paul said to the Corinthians: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

If I have the courage to say to you instead: "Die to-day," it is because from this day I can say to you with a good conscience: "To-morrow you will live." Amen.



IV.

The Risen One.

“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain.”—1 *Cor.* xv. 17.

WE left the Son of Man expiring on the instrument of torture. After a death comes the funeral.

A rich man who had known Jesus, obtained authority from the governor to take charge of His body. They took it down from the cross, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a new sepulchre, which was sealed with the stone which was to conceal Him to the end of time.

Is this all ?

The historians to whom we owe these details are unanimous in relating that on the next day

but one, some persons having come to the sepulchre, found the stone rolled away and the body gone. At the same time, He who had been dead showed Himself alive to His former disciples. On several successive occasions He made Himself known to them, He eat with them, and allowed them to touch His wounds. He quitted them at last, after having said to them: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."*

We next see this handful of simple men scattered abroad, who without credit or eloquence, without prestige of any sort, were to proclaim the reign of Christ, and to change the face of the world. They have but one text for their sermons: Jesus is risen, and we are His witnesses.

This is what they preach at Jerusalem, at Corinth, at Rome; it is this that they proclaim to Jews and Gentiles, to the most refined minds as well as to barbarians. It is the new word, the

* Acts i. 8.

creative word of the apostleship. It was this that gave it originality and force, but it must also be confessed that in some cases it was an occasion of reproach.

Let us now follow St. Paul to Athens, the metropolis of ancient culture. We shall, doubtless, have occasion to admire his infinite tact and exquisite urbanity amongst the citizens of the wise Socrates and the divine Plato, but he will not change for them the ground-plan of his teaching. Conducted to the Areopagus, called upon to expound his doctrine before the most polished and learned assembly in the world, he proclaimed to them that God had given an infallible proof of the august mission of the Son of Man on earth by raising Him from the dead. Up to this point, they listened with curiosity, even with favour; but as soon as he spoke of one raised from the dead, they interrupted him. Some mocked, and others said: "We will hear thee again of this matter."*

* Acts xvii. 32.

My brethren, there are Athenians in the Church to-day, and I do not know that I shall venture beyond the limits of strict truth, in presuming that there are some in this assembly. The great discussion which agitates Christian thought in our day, tends with irresistible logic to concentrate itself more than ever on the fact which served for the basis of apostolic preaching. There is a numerous class among us of cultivated and enquiring minds, priding themselves on common sense rather than on depth, who would lend a willing ear to Christian teaching on condition that it would disencumber itself of all that distinguishes it from philosophy, and especially from the narrative of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, there is a new school of authors of merit amongst those who are charged to teach Christianity, who, glorying in their sympathy with the most admired representatives of contemporary philosophic literature and fashionable science, some of them openly deny, and others simply cast into the shade, the

miraculous event, which until now, whether justly or not, has been considered by the Christian Church to be the foundation of its faith and hope. Let us hasten to explain. I do not speak of railers or impious persons, not even of adversaries, in intention at least. They wish to be Christian, they profess to live as Christians, "but," they ask, "must we believe in the resurrection?"

There is certainly an advantage in putting the question in a definite form like this. It is perfectly clear. But it is impossible to conceal from ourselves that it resolves itself into a question of extreme gravity. Let us consider the following questions, before any discussion of the subject. If Christianity was introduced into the world by the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; if it resolved itself at the time of its first expansion and first fervour, into a formula expressive of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; if it has never existed anywhere independently of this faith—and these are matters of fact which do not

admit of dispute—have we not a right to ask whether, if faith in the resurrection were to disappear from the world, Christianity itself—or what has hitherto been called by that name—would not disappear with it? This is, you will say, a question of experience. I do not deny it, but it is not God's will that it should ever be determined by experience. Meanwhile, we will try to put it to the proof of reason.

Without the resurrection, what of Christian doctrine would remain? Jesus Christ, you will say, His admirable person, His admirable history, His admirable words; these would always cause Him to remain a unique personage, and give Him an exclusive empire over men's hearts and consciences. I think, my brethren, that in speaking thus, you do homage unconsciously, and, by a happy in consequence, to the incomparable prestige which, for eighteen centuries, Christ risen has maintained for that portion of the human race which invokes His name. You will not dispute that to this day, no one else has a prestige like it,

any that it would not be insane to compare with it. Nevertheless, this prestige must not magnify Him in your eyes, for perhaps after all it is the result of a lie—an inconceivable false opinion—a dense vapour of illusion which must be dispelled.

We will not allow ourselves to be too much prejudiced in favour of Christ. And, since you reduce Him to a simple mortal, we will take care not to apply any other standard to Him than that which is applicable to simple mortals.

I take His own words. One fact strikes me at once. He predicted His resurrection. It is the counterpoise with which He always accompanied the prediction of His violent death, when He announced it to His disciples. He told them that “The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.*”

Is this an impostor, deceiving them? Is He an enthusiast, who deceives Himself? In either case

* Matt. xvii. 22, 23.

He would not be the admirable personage whom you think you can retain.

How did He come Himself to entertain this faith in His resurrection? I need not explain it to you. The fact is, that He believed in it just as He believed in the tragic catastrophe which was so soon, to all appearance, to annihilate the effects of His efforts. I do not draw this conclusion solely from a few detached words, however precise they may be. I draw it from His teaching and conduct as a whole. This is a fact to which sufficient attention has not been paid. Jesus never spoke or acted, during His short career, like one who had time before Him, but invariably as one whose days were numbered. Provision for old age, even for mature life, was at least as foreign to Him as provision for early death is to ordinary mortals. But, on the other hand, He never spoke or acted as if death would be to Him a termination, but always as if it were a point of departure. His life was constructed on the basis of His death; everything had reference to it. That which to

others is a disappearance, will be to Him a great and signal manifestation. He always conducted Himself as if He were to be the victim of to-morrow, but as if He were to be the Risen One the day following. Now, can you imagine that the end of all this was to deceive? To deceive whom? Everybody? In whose interest? The idea is an absurdity.

What then remains but to consider Him an enthusiast, a sublime dreamer, cherishing the most *naïve* illusion, anticipating the most colossal deception that ever was. What is life, my brethren, with the clear foresight of death? The games of children building castles of sand upon the shore, to see them demolished by the waves. We open our eyes to the light, our minds to science, our hearts to love; for a little day we are the centre of all things; we construct an ideal, we seem to grasp it; a little sooner or later, a wave of the great ocean passes over it, and reduces all to ruin. "The last act is tragic, however comic all the rest may be. We throw dust upon our heads at last,

and there it is for ever!" Catastrophe, contradiction, mystery.

I cast my eye on the brief career of the Son of Man, so monumental in its narrow limits, and I only see in it an example among many memorable ones of these capricious reverses. What was the use of this ideally beautiful conception of life? What was the use of this wealth of holiness, of suffering, of wisdom, of greatness? Of what use, above all, was this sublime dream of a resurrection which was to crown His work and insure His reign so marvellously? Was all this to vanish in its turn, in the impenetrable darkness of the impenetrable future? Was all this to disappear on the shores of the unknown, neither more nor less obscurely than the lowest of mankind? Oh! melancholy conclusion of a brilliant beginning. To all our experience of illusions, it adds one more which surpasses all the rest, and proclaims for the thousandth time, but with extreme emphasis, the inexorable decree of our nothingness. There was a man greater and wiser than all the rest—a man

without fault or sin—a man who, in mind and heart and life, was worthy to wear the crown in the kingdom of his fellows, and to exercise over them a universal empire of love and adoration. There was a man unique among men—in a word, there was a perfect man—but he made shipwreck in face of death, and disappeared as we shall one day disappear. Death finally attached him to his car like an illustrious captive, and he served, like all the rest, to illustrate the sinister majesty of the king of terrors, and furnished the most brilliant ornament of his triumph.

Such as Christ is, such is Christianity.

Take away from our convictions the faith in a risen Saviour, what remains? Faith in immortality? Alas! this was not so securely seated before, and I fear you give it a blow such as it will not recover. Faith in immortality! vague expression of the desire to live which exists at the bottom of the human mind, which has been the subject of a hope, even of a presumption with some rare geniuses; faith in im-

mortality is so closely identified with faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, wherever His name has been proclaimed, that to take away this support is to take away every support.

It is true that Jesus spoke of the future with a certainty and authority which no one had ever dared to adopt before Him. But of what use are these affirmations, contradicted by His own defeat? What did He know after all? what did He demonstrate any more than any one else? If He was so grossly deceived Himself in His predictions of triumph and of resurrection, who will guarantee that He was not also deceived in His pretended revelations of heaven, of the house of our Father who is in heaven? Whatever He said, death remains for Him and for us, with its veil of mystery and its dark abysses. I may admire His confidence in the face of this impenetrable and silent unknown land, but I confess that I feel more attracted by the sincere doubts of Socrates, who, when conversing with his friends of the chances of immortality, prolonged

his discourse in order to intoxicate himself, as he said, with the hopes that he drew from his own mind. In spite of him and after him, the question remains just as it was. We may still reason again and again, exercise our minds, analyse the infinite, intoxicate ourselves with hope or with despair, penetrate into the gulf until we are the victims of illusion or of vertigo.

Consult your learned men, who introduce learning into the sanctuary. Ask them what they have learnt from their dusty books and the smoke of their night watches.

They will tell you that the problem of the destiny of mankind has made no progress for them since the time of Socrates, who made no advance upon his predecessors. Then bring this conclusion before the tribunal of common sense. Ever since reason has been consuming itself in efforts to pierce the future, it has not discovered or demonstrated anything. Does it then become, day by day, more probable that there will be an immortality for man? No, indeed! You know

that the answer will be that it becomes therefore more and more improbable; and with so much doubt it is the safest way to abstain from hoping. Bad logic, I admit, for in such a case, if there be but one chance in a thousand, we ought to take that chance. But can you say that this is not the reasoning which arises in men's minds? Do you not know that the world is there, the passions are there, that a thousand specious pretexts, a thousand excuses present themselves? Do you not know that lust has also its logic, too often triumphant over evidence itself, how much more, then, over demonstrated uncertainty? And if you take away this foundation, do you not feel that everything is shaking, and is ready to fall to the ground with it? If, in future, we are to see the great lines of Christian conviction vacillate, do you not feel that by a powerful necessity and an inevitable rebound, they vanish in the provisional region of a present which no longer knows what remains to look forward to? I appeal to your fairness and quick perceptions to perceive

at once the vast train of consequences which time fails me to unfold to you.

Christianity is the religion of a personal God. But how will you henceforth retain this personal God? Does it not seem to you that He loses His footing upon earth, and mounts up into the regions of silence and darkness, where every living figure disappears?

Christianity is the religion of reconciliation. Reconciliation of whom and with whom henceforth? Vain word, which no longer has any meaning when we hear it, unless it means the dis-illusion of a soul which thought it had need of a reconciliation, in the expectation of falling into the hands of a living God after death. Christianity is the religion of love and devotion. But what becomes of the love of a God who becomes cold in death and vanishes away? Do you not feel that the purpose for which He came would be entirely frustrated?

What becomes of those spiritual affections, which are only bound together by the love of

God, who is love? What becomes of self-sacrifice? In what sense can we take these words, which sum up in themselves the essence of practical Christianity: "To lose life in order to find it?"

I know that in the world of mind, as in the world of matter, night does not always succeed to day without twilight. For a long time after the sun has disappeared from the horizon, light is diffused over the earth. And if it were possible that faith in Christ risen should disappear from Christendom to-day, it would not be to-morrow that we should experience the extreme consequences of the irreparable loss. Our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren would perhaps remember something of the light that shines on us, and would anxiously cherish its last faint reflection.

But that you may not deceive yourselves, my brethren, this door closed upon the future world makes night. This breach in the walls of our prison once closed, death has seized his prey

again. It subjugates us once more, shuts us up, stifles us in the inexorable bondage of this dismal dungeon, let us rather say this leaden coffin, which we call the earth.

A Christ without a resurrection! Christianity without the Risen One! Do we know what it means?

Providence sometimes prepares instruction for us, which is so much the more admirable because it is drawn from the most unexpected sources. Just at the time when, in our privileged western world, doubts are spreading under the shadow of learning about the fact and the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God, who is also the Master of learning, my brethren, and guides her in her boldest researches as well as in her proudest victories, with the wise patience of a father who spells their lesson word by word to his children, God, I say, has judged it opportune to turn the attention of the learned to the profound darkness of the east, in order to bring to light the noble and touching figure of a man

who has been sometimes compared to Jesus Christ; and he might almost form a pendant to Jesus Christ, if it were not for the resurrection and the splendours which radiate from this point of light. Do you know the history of Buddha Sakyamouni?

He was the only son of a king, born for greatness. Handsome, clever, adored by his relations, he was gifted with a most tender heart and generous mind. He was at an early age so profoundly affected by the spectacle of the miseries that afflict the human race, that he conceived the idea of devoting his life to relieve them.

He therefore quitted his father's house, renounced the throne to which he was heir, and despoiled himself of everything, in order that by sharing them he might study the miseries which he proposed to relieve. His attention was soon attracted to death, that supreme calamity, in which all the rest seem to be swallowed up, and round which they revolve as round a mysterious centre. He tried to sound its depths,

and to discover its secrets. He demanded of it a god, he demanded a hope, he demanded a law, he asked for something for the soul of man. But he received for answer, "There is nothing." He concluded, therefore, that the highest wisdom must consist in detaching oneself from everything, in order to make oneself equivalent to nothing. With his own hands he dis-interred a corpse, took off the winding-sheet, and made himself a mantle of it. For some years he retired into inaccessible places, and gave himself up to the singular occupation of stifling within himself every desire, every wish, every affection, every recollection, all fear and all hope, even the consciousness of his own existence.

When he thought that he had attained his object, he gathered a few disciples together, and initiated them into the processes of contemplation, by which they gradually attained the vertigo of annihilation. He then travelled about with them, preaching and evangelising, led an admirable life of renunciation, gentleness, and perseverance. He discovered and propagated that celebrated

doctrine of annihilation, which still weighs heavily upon three hundred millions of human beings, which is nothing less than death, death itself taking possession of the brain of man in the form of a fixed idea.

When after this, I read again those words of St. Paul: "If Christ is not risen our faith is vain," I tremble. As I look, I seem to see thick darkness arising again to enfold the world, and to see our precious, our holy, our best-beloved faith losing ground, fading away, vanishing at last behind the victorious shadow of death. Our faith! the support of the desolate, the peace of the dying, is it then destined to perish? God forbid! But in the shudder that you have experienced, you have felt, I am sure, that it is the vital question that we are discussing to-day.

Have we not all already given too many pledges to death? This is a matter concerning our wives and children. We are fighting for our hearths. Let us advance to meet the enemy; it is time to measure our strength with his.

What have you to object to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures? What are your motives for doubting the resurrection of Jesus Christ? In answer to this query, I think I see appear in the first place, the imposing form of learning. Her brow is charged with thought, and her arms are loaded with books.

“We have examined the narratives which report the pretended resurrection of Jesus Christ,” she says, “and we find that their authenticity is doubtful. The date of them may be many years later than that which your tradition assigns to them, which throws the first doubt on their historic value. Further, we have observed, that the narratives do not entirely agree. They mention various details, even some that seem on several points to contradict each other. We conclude from this, that these narratives may be only the expression, tardily committed to writing, of legends and myths which gradually arose in the simple minds of the first Christians. However this may be, it is a historical problem

of the most complex and difficult kind. We are examining, comparing, criticising. Pickaxe in hand, we are clearing the ground. Afterwards, we shall amass materials, and if ever we succeed in constructing a solid edifice, your remotest posterity will thank us for the shelter." Thank you! Until then, we think it will be wise to suspend our judgment.

Be re-assured, my brethren; I do not propose to give you the spectacle of a learned passage of arms. This redoubtable figure that we have just called up before us is nothing but a phantom. We have nothing to do with it. Let learning make its attacks and defend itself in the arena of learning. There it will find equals to cope with. We must have books for adversaries, and thank God, the contest will not cease for lack of combatants. Let it suffice us, then, to learn, that from this quarter, the news is good. The triumphs of truth do not always belong to those who make the most noise.

Metaphor apart, the question which occupies us

is not one of erudition; it is purely a question of common sense and judgment, entirely within the capacity of poor laymen like ourselves. Observe that it is a question of fact—of a fact reduced to its most simple expression. Was Jesus Christ raised? Yes or No? Now, the fact rests upon evidence entirely sheltered from the attacks of learning—and this is admitted even by learning itself, and that of the most advanced kind. It must not be forgotten that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was preached long before the compilation of the sacred text, the date of which is discussed, and the details criticised. The letters written by the apostles, and which were only one form of their preaching, make a faith of it, and have an irrefragable apologetic value.

Bossuet brought forward this consideration. He says, with much good sense: “The epistles of St. Paul alone, so animated, so original, so full of the time, and of the affairs and interests that existed then—in a word, of so marked a character; these epistles, I say, received by the churches to which

they were addressed, and by them communicated to other churches, should suffice to convince candid minds that all is sincere and original in the writings left us by the apostles."

This is true in a general way, and how much more in particular for all that concerns the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

From among the epistles of the great apostle, I select one, up to this time absolutely undisputed; the first to the Corinthians. I open the 15th chapter, and this is what I read. Paul recalls to his readers the ministry which he had exercised among them, and the teaching by which he had brought them to the faith. He says: "For I delivered unto you that which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are

fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”*

What do you say to this passage, taken indifferently from among a hundred others? Do you not find in these words, written twenty years after the event, by an eye-witness, invoking the testimony of five hundred other eye-witnesses known to him; do you not find in these words the most simple and indisputable confirmation of all that the book of the Acts narrates to us of the preaching of the first apostles? This is so plain that every one agrees in it. “This is the entire teaching of the apostles,” says one of the most learned authors, but also one of the most advanced in the path of negations. “This is the entire teaching of the Apostles; the book of Acts has preserved it for us in an elementary and simple form: ‘You have killed the Christ,’ said the disciples to the Jews; ‘but God has released Him from the tomb, to

* 1 Cor. xv. 3—8.

raise Him up to the heavens.'” You understand this is the entire teaching of the Apostles!

Have I not a right to say to you, after such an admission from learning, that we can now very well dispense with it for a moment, and may politely beg it to retire? It has put us in possession of a gift, the value of which we can appreciate without its help, and from which we know what conclusions to draw. It only requires a little attention and candour, things which the least member of the flock, a merchant, or a man of the world, is quite as capable of possessing, and is as competent to exercise, as the most consummate critic, or the most profound philosopher. Go, then, ye learned men, and attend to your own affairs, while you leave ours to us. We will call you again if we want you. But, of all things, do not come and throw the dust of your libraries in our eyes, for we feel ourselves to be in the presence of one of those things which God, in His wisdom, has seen fit to make especially plain to straightforwardness and honesty, and these we possess as

well as you. The question for us, is to prove the historic evidence of a fact. In order to render an inquiry as impartial as possible, we will at present consider neither the supernatural nor religious character of the event. Let us divest our minds of all prejudice of whatsoever kind.

We are investigating an event of past times, which does not more personally interest us, is nothing more to us than some celebrated battle, or some famous incident of antiquity.

All historic certainty rests upon two grounds: testimony on the one hand; on the other the relation of the event to the course of contemporary history. Thus, you believe that Julius Cæsar was assassinated in the senate of Rome, just when he was about to possess himself of absolute power. Why?

First, because you know that the historians who have reported this tragic end to us, were able to receive the narrative from eye-witnesses, whose veracity you have no reason to suspect. Next, because this violent and premature death is woven

so naturally into the woof of contemporary history, it is in such close relation to what goes before and after, that if by any possibility you could be assured that Cæsar was not assassinated, you would find yourselves in the presence of an enigma.

To ask any other proofs than these of a fact, would be simply absurd. And when these two proofs are found together with a certain degree of authenticity, they corroborate each other, and produce upon the mind a conviction which generally places the event beyond the reach of doubt.

Now, apply this double inquiry to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Have we in this case witnesses worthy of credit? To put the question is to answer it.

Recall to your minds the passage from St. Paul which I quoted just now. "It must be," says Pascal, "that the apostles were either deceivers or deceived."

Deceived! When five hundred persons—if it were twelve only—when twelve persons sound in

body and mind, capable of the coolest observation, I may say pre-occupied with ideas the most contradictory to the fact; when twelve persons tell us that they have seen, and not only so but heard, and not only that but touched; when their testimony is accompanied by such narratives as the conversion of St. Thomas, and the restoration of St. Peter. If they do not speak truth, they must be liars indeed.

Deceivers! My brethren, you know them, you have seen them at their work, they are your brothers, your friends. Will you give them the lie? Ah! the whole Roman senate which attests the death of Cæsar, is not to be compared for weight of character, to one of these men so candid and so tried, whose names are St. Peter, St. John, and St. James; who carry their sincerity so far that they tell us of their doubts before they tell us of their faith, and who take care to inform us of their weaknesses and their prejudices, before telling us of their greatness and their heroism. Besides, is it not an insult to their martyrdom to

suspect their good faith? One blushes to think of it. Pascal says again on this point: "I believe witnesses who incur the danger of death." Do you say that martyrdom does not always prove the truth of a doctrine? So do I. People give their lives for error as well as for truth, when they mistake error for truth.

But it is not a question now of the truth of a doctrine; it is a question pure and simple of the sincerity of witnesses; it is a question whether the apostles died guilty of flagrant imposture; it is a question whether they endured all the labours of their apostleship, and the tortures of martyrdom for the absurd obstinacy of repeating everywhere and during the whole of their lives, that they had seen with their own eyes what they had not seen. It is a question whether St. Paul had been lying all his life, when he said in prospect of martyrdom: "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."* "But none of these things move me, so that I might finish my

* Acts xxiii. 6.

course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord.”*

It is a question whether they all agreed to lie all their lives, when, threatened with death for their testimony, they replied, by the mouth of St. Peter, to the Sanhedrim, which only commanded them to be quiet: “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus; and we are his witnesses of these things.”†

I ask every sincere man, and every well-constituted mind, whether in the history of the human race, there is any fact so well attested as the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

But, as we have said, the most credible testimony is not the only condition of historic evidence. However faithfully we may believe a fact to have been reported, it only acquires the highest confirmation, when it comes before us so closely connected with what precedes and follows it, that it offers the most natural explanation of it. The materials of history are like the materials of a

* Acts xx. 24.

† Acts v. 29, 30, 32.

building. They support each other reciprocally in such a manner, that if one piece is wanting all the rest are affected by it. They call the absent to account. It is a testimony of another sort, a blind and necessary testimony of things by the side of the free and intelligent testimony of men. After the proof it is a counterproof. Now, has the event which we are considering received this confirmation? Does it take its place in history like a link of a chain? Does it accord with what precedes and follows it?

May I not say in this case also, to ask the question is to answer it? The place of the resurrection of Jesus Christ among the events which accompany it! It is like the key-stone of an arch. Its place is such, that with it perfect equilibrium is maintained; take it away and everything is disjointed and disturbed. Whether you consider the prophecies of the Old Testament, their strange paradoxes, their inexplicable contradictions, the mysterious antithesis of a servant of the Lord, in turn, cut off out of the

land of the living and prolonging His days ; satisfied with the travail of His soul, after having made His soul an offering for sin, taken from prison and from judgment, afterwards to found the universal kingdom of righteousness and peace ; whether you consider the life of the Son of Man, this surprising confidence in the power of His death, to bring about the triumph of all His plans ; this incomprehensible pre-occupation which made Him invariably postpone His glory, and the accomplishment of His promises until after His apparent defeat, by a real descent into the sepulchre ; whether you consider the despair of the disciples, and their re-assurance after the short space of three days, which seemed to place upon them alone all the weight of destiny ; or the prodigy of the establishment of Christianity by the simple proclamation of the Son of Man as the Son of God, by the power of His resurrection from the dead :—without this royal and primordial fact, each of these facts becomes but a problem, and each series of facts a series of in-

soluble problems. Suppress the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you will decapitate history; and not only contemporary history, but in truth, universal history also.

You will see, that I shall never finish if I enter into the details of this demonstration. It is a work for your leisure. I will only bring forward one point by way of example, to give you an idea of the value of considerations of this sort. I ask how you will explain the faith of the first preachers of the Gospel, if you take away from this faith the basis of the fact which they proclaim. You will not accuse me of exaggerating the terms of a problem, by an artifice of declamation. I quote from an opponent, one of those who has wandered the furthest in the lost paths of the negative science, but also one of the most sincere, the most serious, and most profoundly respectable even in his wanderings.* This is the exposition:

“ Let us imagine, if we can, the state of mind of the little flock of believers on the evening of

* Scherer.

the day of their Master's execution, the day after the crucifixion. What a blow! What a shipwreck of illusions! They had placed all their hopes upon the meek preacher of Galilee.

“Jesus had given Himself out as the Messiah, and they had *naïvely* believed His declaration. They were sure that their Master would, sooner or later, cause His character to be recognised, and that He would be carried with acclamation to a throne. They saw in Him a Monarch in disguise, the inheritor of the magnificent promises of God. A few weeks, a little patience, and they will see the wonders of the last days. They will themselves participate in these honours—but no, all this is but a dream; the critical moment has arrived, and Jesus has succumbed. Instead of being enthroned, He has been executed—He is dead. You comprehend, He is dead who was to have lived for ever. He who was to have reigned in more than earthly glory has perished upon a cross, like the worst of criminals. It is not much that He is dead, His promises

have perished with Him. Poor disciples, He has deceived you. You would be happy if you had only lost the head of the family, the friend, the revered master. But you have not even the consolation of admiring Him; you are compelled to doubt Him, to regard Him as insane, even as an imposter.

“Three days have passed, days of sorrow and shame, of which we can form no idea; three days have passed away and all is changed! These same men, yesterday confounded and in despair, doubting Christ, God, and themselves, these same men have regained everything. They believe again, and more firmly than ever. They triumph. Henceforward nothing can shake them. And this conviction which they have themselves, they will succeed in communicating to others. Listen, O world! Thou art going to hear accents of persuasion so irresistible, that thou wilt have to end by submitting to them.

“Such was the day after the crucifixion, and such the day after that. What, then, had passed

between these two moments?" Here common sense seems to have forsaken our author, and replies with us; the resurrection, the real fact, the palpable, brilliant miracle of the resurrection, which has been fully confirmed. What would you put in its place? Listen, I quote again: "It appears that the tomb in which the body of Jesus had been placed, was found empty—this empty sepulchre became a ray of light for the disciples." In plain language, they worship and believe! They worship, and "henceforth nothing can shake them."

They worship—"Listen, O world! thou art going to hear accents of persuasion so irresistible, that thou wilt have to end by submitting to them."

These men, "confounded, in despair, doubting Christ, God, and themselves"—"a ray of light at an empty tomb"—"and they have regained everything. They believe again, and more firmly than ever. They triumph!" It is this ray of light which will guide them to the conquest of the world. This is the ray of light that will not be extinguished by

oceans of blood! This is the ray of light which will sweep away the temples of the false gods, which will make kings tremble on their thrones, will change the course of history, decide the destiny of nations, will judge the world, and renew the face of the earth. This is the ray of light which will traverse the ages and the universe from east to west, raising man to the heavens, and shedding upon the earth, as the least of its benefits, the boasted marvel of modern civilisation. What think you of this ray of light, my brethren?

I have seen the star of day arrived at the end of his course, descend to the horizon to lay himself down on his sepulchre. Nature, which contemplates it, appears as if immediately drawn down with it. Dense shadows spread over its inanimate face, engulfing soon the highest summits of the mountains, and rendering darkness itself visible in the depths of "those unknown spaces whose eternal silence terrifies thought."* At the same time life itself seems dried up at its source.

* Pascal.

Man himself becomes benumbed, and sleeps. It is night, sister of death, when no man can work. But soon, on the opposite side of the abyss, we see one peak gilded with light, then another, and another. What is happening? See in the distance waves of light, which descend and spread over the sides of the mountains, rush into the valleys, and spread themselves like a flood; then suddenly they send their rapid messengers to the ends of the earth with this appeal: "Awake! awake! ye who sleep, and arise from among the dead!" The earth opens its eyes, all the sounds of life are heard again, man goes forth from his dwelling, the birds sing, creation breaks forth again with its joyous hymn of life. What, then, has happened? Nothing, I tell you. Perhaps a dream of light while you slept. Anything you like, except the rising of the sun.

I say, my brethren, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, attested by witnesses worthy of all credit, is the best explanation of the chain of historic events amidst which it took place. I say,

therefore, that it unites in the highest degree the two conditions which establish the evidence of a past event. I say, indeed, that if it were a question of any other event of the sort which make up the annals of humanity, we should hold any mind desperately obstinate which refused to adopt this conclusion.

Why, then, will you not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Because it is a supernatural event? Ah, here we have the word pronounced at last. Supernatural! After this word, people will listen to nothing more, it is an answer to everything. I really believe it is a method adopted to oppose all demonstration, and to be thrown, in case of need, in the face of evidence itself.

We must take care what we are about when we handle such weapons.

Is there or is there not a supernatural order, above that which in our stammering ignorance we call the natural order? This is nothing less

than the gravest question which has agitated the mind of man since there was a mind of man to agitate, for it is really the question of religion. When we speak of religion, we speak of relation; relation between whom, I ask, if it is not between the inferior and dependent order of nature, and the supernatural and sovereign order which the mind conceives as above nature? Is this superior order a reality, a possible object of some kind of religion? Does it imply free interference with the conditions of natural order, the indispensable condition of all religion?

These are questions into which I shall not enter. The brains of metaphysicians are used to them, while mankind in general gives an affirmative answer which also has its weight. But I will console those who do not recoil from the admission of a supernatural event, by telling them that they are in good company. There are great minds, you need not doubt, among the number of those who acknowledge that the Father of Spirits has the power to work miracles,

which signify wonderful things, even the resurrection of His Son. Are there, on the other hand, minds equally great, geniuses equally profound, who have demonstrated to themselves the necessary immobility of the Highest, so that they have reduced the Creator to be no more, as has been said, than the “contemplative servant of the works of His right hand?” It may be so. But, after all, it is not a question of great minds or profound genius; it is a question for us, my brethren, who simply belong to the class of thinking beings. If the reasons for our opinions are not particularly profound, they are ours nevertheless, and therefore the only ones that it suits us to examine and weigh attentively. What are they? Why do we say that the admission of a supernatural event, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is repugnant to us?

We say so because of the infirmity of our faith, of faith in everything that is raised above the earth, faith in the invisible, faith in the strict sense of the word. Shut up in the prison of our

five senses, we make what we can see and touch, the measure of what is.

We take our infinitely small, our microscopic every-day experience, for the normal condition of things. We call this good sense! Yes, if that is good which draws us downwards. It is the good sense which Vinet somewhere calls, "the inspirer of the most commonplace moments of life, and the genius of the dullest members of society."

We talk of the implicit faith of the ignorant. Do you not suppose that they also have their incredulity? Go and tell one of them that the earth turns round the sun, he will shrug his shoulders. Does he not see that it is just the contrary? Go and tell him that three thousand miles away there are people walking with the heavens beneath their heads and the earth above their feet; he will be angry, and probably ask you if you take him for a simpleton. We are all more or less infected with this vice; we do not like to believe what we cannot see. Well, be it

so. Only we must be willing to go where this leads us. And take care that you do not strain at the gnat and swallow the camel.

You have not witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, nor have I ; then we will not believe it ; this is what is said. But, on the other hand, it is understood that we believe what we do see. Now I am going to tell you what I see, and which you must see also.

Jesus conceived a plan. He understood the execution of it, and it has been carried out with the most complete success.

In order to make this clearer, I quote from an illustrious author, Bourdaloue, who in his turn quotes St. Augustine : “ When Jesus Christ, at the age of thirty years, after an obscure and hidden life, willed at length to manifest Himself to the world and to preach to it an entirely new law, to what did He aspire ? To the most astonishing thing, to nothing less than to creating a new world, to abolishing superstitions more ancient than the memory of man, with which the

people held that all their happiness was connected, which they preserved like the heritage of their fathers, for which they fought with more ardour than for their lives, which they considered to be the foundation of their republics and their states. It was necessary to bring them to renounce errors which the custom of almost every age had sanctioned, which were supported by the example of all nations, which favoured all the interests of nature, and the possession of which could not be disturbed without almost disturbing the universe. This was what had to be pulled down. But what was it that had to be built up? An austere and inconvenient law, a blind faith, a religion contrary to all the inclinations of the flesh. What an enterprise! and what was necessary to the achievement of it? It was necessary that He should be exposed to having all the powers of earth for enemies,—the wisdom of politicians, the authority of sovereigns, the cruelty of tyrants, the zeal of idolators, the impiety of atheists.

““ If then, ”” says St. Augustine, ““ Jesus Christ, before taking the first step towards the execution of this great design, had communicated with one of the philosophers of that age, a man of good sense and judgment, had opened His mind to him, telling him besides that He would not avail Himself of any of the means dictated by human prudence, that He would rely neither upon credit nor riches, learning nor eloquence, would not this philosopher have treated the enterprise as a chimera and a folly? Nevertheless, this is what was done, this is the marvel that we are contemplating.’”

What is to be said now? Alone with His secret thoughts, with a superhuman skill and foresight that confounds us, He succeeded in destroying the indulgent and ancient superstitions which humanity had invented for itself, and which were a shelter at once for its aspirations, its inclinations, and its vices; and in substituting something else fashioned with infinite skill, taking possession of souls and moulding them at

will, attracting them at first, to subjugate them afterwards to its yoke.

He succeeded in making men believe in a living, free, and holy God, whose apparently singular and capricious decrees must be adored by all as the unquestionable decrees of wisdom itself; whose goodness must be praised even in the lowest depths of suffering and distress. He succeeded in making men believe in a life to come, inaugurated by a terrible judgment leading to an eternity of joy or an eternity of pain, for which, therefore, everything here below must be sacrificed.

He succeeded in imposing a life of renunciation and of self-sacrifice, quite as contrary to nature as all the prodigies called miracles. He succeeded in commanding even for His person an unheard-of respect, in causing supernatural powers to be attributed to Him, and even in causing Himself to be worshipped in consequence of an asserted resurrection. For the establishment of this doctrine He caused oceans of blood to flow, and whose blood? The blood of His disciples!

But a living God, a life to come, a retribution, a resurrection: all these are things which we cannot see, which are never seen; empty phantoms, therefore, on which we have but to breathe to cause them to disappear with the rest. You cannot believe what you cannot see! What do you see now in the success of the enterprise of Jesus Christ? Henceforth you will only be able to see one thing in it; the most cruel and the most colossal mystification. Humanity is the victim of the darkest enterprise, conducted with the most consummate perfidy. It struggles under the pressure of I know not what power from without, of a veritable vampire which has attached itself to its soul to devour it. It is beset by a dream which it cannot dissipate, and to which, meanwhile, in its *naïve* illusion it sacrifices everything. Oh! what has not already been sacrificed to it!

I do not know what impression this view produces on your minds. As for me, when I lend my ear to those words whose simple depth

rends my heart: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,"* I turn involuntarily to the form of Jesus Christ, and I see Him clothed with a new greatness, equal to the first, but this time it chills and frightens me. It is not merely an impostor that I see before me; it is the genius, what shall I say? the very god of imposture.

Rouse yourselves, you whom He still seduces. I remind you of the sighs, the tears, the blood which He has already drawn from millions of our brethren, and raising the standard of a holy revolt, I exclaim with you: "If there is yet time, let us crush this infamous person."

You will not have supernatural light?

On the strength of this evidence, which places the soul of man, as regards Jesus Christ, in the alternative of absolute hatred or entire adoration, I draw you after me, and will not permit you to stop till you are in supernatural darkness! You will cry out against this, I know. You will ask

* 1 Cor. xv. 19.

me, as if I had robbed you of your property, for those shreds of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, of His moral teaching, of His work, which you profess to preserve, although they can really no longer be maintained on the principle on which you reject His resurrection.

You will not believe what you have not seen; still you believe in a personal God whom you have not seen. You will not believe in what you have not seen; but still you believe in a life to come, which no man has ever seen. You will not believe in what you have not seen; but, nevertheless, you believe in a plan of wisdom and goodness contradicted every day by what you see. You are ready to believe in all these things, yet you argue against a fact on account of its supernatural character—supernatural it is, it is true like the rest; but on account of its supreme importance in comparison with the rest, God has willed that it alone shall be attested by witnesses most worthy of credit, and that it shall reach you supported on the basis of the most convincing

historic certainty! Oh! rare, admirable, sublime inconsequence!

Who knows whether we must not say that you will not believe, precisely because you are afraid of seeing too much or too clearly. In any case it is impossible that you can have escaped the impression which pierces the soul like a sword: If Christ is raised—God! He is God! I have seen Him, He has passed, He was there! Yes, my brethren, if Christ is raised, God is there, He is in Christ, He has looked upon, He has enlightened, I had almost said He has judged the earth! If Christ is raised, death is but a veil, man lives again behind it. A future awaits him, no more doubts, no more uncertainty, no more excuses! If Christ is raised, all the words of Christ are raised with him. They shine as true words of life beyond and above time. Let heaven and earth pass away; henceforth the words of Christ will not pass away! If Christ is raised, all the invisible world is filled with light. It is like the brightness of the sun suddenly

breaking forth after the feeble light of the stars.

Now, we do not like too much light for our souls. Twilight suits us better. A little light for the invisible guest which reminds us of immortality, but a little darkness also for the vulgar inhabitant of earth who wishes to enjoy life while he holds it. A little light for prudent foresight for to-morrow, but a little darkness for the pressing desires of to-day.

There is that in us which would die in total darkness, but there is also that in us which would die in perfect light.

And if we do not wish that our souls should perish, neither do we wish that sin should perish. I have named it, sin; that is to say, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, the love of this world, whether it be empty and frivolous, vulgar or refined; sin; that is to say, earth, time, ourselves, the present age, interest, ambition, idleness, the bondage of habit, and the bondage of opinion. Sin! it is this which closes

our eyes to evidence, and our hearts to the most touching appeals; this it is which perpetually throws shadows on the too brilliant points of truth; this is what now disparages the august form of Christ, now banishes it into inaccessible heights, rejects, effaces it, tries to render it intangible for fear of being seized by it.

This it is which, after having vainly tried during the course of ages, to rob Him of the crown of His divinity or of the garments of His humanity, has now changed its tactics, and concentrates all its efforts on the resurrection, knowing that to deny Him this glory, at once human and divine, is to deny Him all the rest. It is sin, the old tempter; this is the enemy that I have long been seeking. I have discovered him at last, I see and recognise him.

But in face of this well-armed adversary whom I have just unmasked, I confess that I feel myself all at once powerless, all my strength has vanished, all my resources are exhausted; there are no more arguments in my mind, nor expedients in my

faculties, no more words ; my arms fall down by my side, and I acknowledge myself vanquished. And if instead of the feeble champion of truth, who, after fighting according to his strength, avows himself defeated, you had before you in this chair, one of the masters of language, even were he the very genius of language, arrived at this point, in prospect of the final encounter, even he would have to surrender arms and commence a retreat.

When sin holds the ground, my brethren, there is neither man nor angel, there is no power either in heaven or earth, capable of convincing an understanding, or of persuading a heart so well guarded. God alone can then carry on the contest, God alone can gain the victory.

We were speaking of the supernatural. It is here especially that we must do so. But I believe in the supernatural, I believe in it with all my heart.

And this is why I have asked of God to take His own cause in hand, and to gain Himself this

victory over you, which I know beforehand that I shall have to renounce.

Would that I could, in my acknowledged and demonstrated weakness, give you an idea of the ineffable privileges that await you in faith, in a Saviour "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."* Ah! if our lost souls require a spirit of regeneration, our regenerate souls require no less an assurance of resurrection. They want a guide in traversing the narrow defiles of death. I have presented this Guide to you. How well He has been selected! It is precisely He whom our hearts would have demanded.

Admire the infinite wisdom and the infinite goodness of God in the adorable prodigy of His infinite power. Was it not natural, was it not in order that the Son of Man, the Holy One and the Just, the Man of Sorrows, the hero, the victim, He who voluntarily plunged into the darkness of condemnation, by holiness, by love to sound its

* Romans iv. 25.

depths, and to confront its terrors in our stead, was it not divinely wise that He should also be the real initiator for us of the evidences of immortality? Was it not for the Prince of Life, the second Adam, who came to expiate the miseries of the first, by plunging with him into the regions of the dead, to find for him the lost path to life? We find this so just, so consequent, so natural (I purposely repeat the word), that we cannot comprehend how it could have been otherwise. Contemplating His death, we await His resurrection. Contemplating His resurrection, we await our own, as if we beheld it already. We who are quickened with Christ, do we not also feel ourselves, as St. Paul says, raised up together with Him?

Ah! if in reconciling us to death, He did not also reconcile us to life, what would hinder us from perpetually sighing with all our might for the blessed hour of our departure? Oh! beyond! beyond! on the other side!

Here we give up our lives, there we shall re-

cover them! Here we sow in tears, there we shall reap with songs of triumph! Here we part among the tombs, there we shall meet again in a paradise of delights! Here we bear our crosses, there we shall receive crowns of glory! Here we die daily with Christ, there we shall eternally reign with Him! And what is it that separates us yet in this sad present from this other side, so much to be desired? It is that which was once most terrible and alarming. But henceforth all is changed.

There was once a famous cape reputed to be the fatal barrier to the navigation of the ocean. Of all those whom the wind or the currents had drawn into its waters, it was said that none had reappeared. It was called the Cape of Storms. A bold navigator determined to surmount the obstacle. He opened the route to the East Indies, acquired for his country the riches of the world, and changed the Cape of Storms into the Cape of Good Hope.

In this great, this glorious voyage to a happy

eternity which we are all taking, there will be in one part a stormy cape to double. But let us henceforth give it its true name. Christ re-christened death on that day, when by death itself He brought life and immortality to light.





V.

The King.

“ Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born.”—*John xviii. 37.*

WE are arriving at the end of our study. It only remains rapidly to sum up our conclusions. And these conclusions are so plain, that they shine by their own light. The Son of Man, if I may use the expression, has proved His thesis. He has come forth victorious, in the most complete and absolute sense of the word, from that threefold trial under which we all succumb. The trial of sin by His perfection; of suffering by His sacrifice; of death by His

resurrection. The result of this victory is royalty.

If He had been extinguished in the grave, all His promises and all our hopes would have been extinguished with Him. To be raised again was to receive and leave a testimony—the sovereign testimony of God Himself. It was to affirm with indisputable authority, that this present life is not a comedy, which is over when the lights are extinguished, but a solemn scene on which the actual drama of eternity is represented. If Christ were dead, we must do as the disciples did, go back to our affairs with one reminiscence the more, and one great illusion the less. If Christ was raised, we must also do as they did; believe, be converted, lose our lives that we may find them. This was why the resurrection was considered the vital point in early times, and for the dawning of eternal life on earth, it will ever remain what air and light are for the blooming of a flower.

Nevertheless, it was before the resurrection that the words “It is finished!” were pronounced.

And in order fully to understand the consummation of the work of the Son of Man, which we will try to give an account of to-day, we must go back a few steps, and fix our attention on what I have already called the culminating point in His earthly career; on that extraordinary death to which we have seen Him led, by the exigencies even of His human perfection, expecting that He will be led thence to a glorious eternity and a definite triumph.

You have often observed that remarkable title which was placed (need we say whether by His blind enemies, or by His more clear-sighted adorers?) over the head of Jesus on the cross. There might be read in the three languages of the world: "This is the King of the Jews." There are only three words too many in the sentence. For strict truth, it would have been sufficient to have written: "This is the King." But the error is more apparent than real, for the King whom the Jews expected, and who had been promised to them, was not to be the King of

their nation only, but the King of the whole earth. All nations, according to the ancient prophecies, were to range themselves under His banner.

Strange and paradoxical truth ! This Crucified One is the King, in the true and absolute sense of the word. The King of humanity, the King of Kings. All the greatness before which men have hitherto prostrated themselves, crumbles into dust on the appearance of this new majesty. The greatness of the gods is that which is most abased. Where now are your altars, your sanctuaries, your carved images, ye gods of Olympus and the Pantheon, now that the growing shadow of the cross of Golgotha covers the earth ? It has been said with reason, that the gods departed from the day when the Crucified One was lifted up on His throne of ignominy. The greatness of men is brought low also, for all greatness which does not consist in self-renunciation, has been convicted by it of folly and littleness, and all true abnegation was but a distant homage rendered to that unsurpassable prodigy of abnega-

tion. Before Him, indeed, everything is diminished or eclipsed.

And what is especially remarkable, is that this is not an accidental co-incidence. The cross is truly a throne. The Crucified One reigns because He was crucified. By reason of the constitution of the world, such as sin has made it, it was necessary that He should be crucified.

Innocent humanity would not have prostrated itself, regenerate humanity will not prostrate itself, except before a King of glory. Fallen humanity, humanity in process of being raised up, could only prostrate itself before a King of sorrows and humiliations. It must not be said that Christ reigns in spite of His cross, but in virtue of it. He announced this Himself, with a depth and accuracy of pre-vision which confounds the imagination, when He said at one time to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

eternal life;”* and at another time to His disciples: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”†

Some hours before this novel sort of elevation, Pilate asked Him: “Art thou a King then?” “To this end was I born,” He replied, as if He would say: “I am of royal rank; I have the vocation to royalty; I only wait for the diadem and the sceptre.” The day of His crucifixion was, in fact, the day of His coronation; on that day, contrary to their own intentions, the powers of earth resigned Him and clothed Him with the insignia of a new royalty, before which they were all to bow down or to be crushed. The prophet had said: “The kings of the earth take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.”‡

They take counsel with infamy and contempt, to crush Him whom they have rejected in their blindness.

“Yet,” saith the Lord, “have I set my king

* John iii. 14, 15. † John xii. 32. ‡ Psalm ii. 2.

upon my holy hill of Zion. I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”*

Now, this reign is nothing else than the realisation of His plan, as I explained it to you in the first discourse. We will now consider successively, the nature and duration of it.

I will define the nature of the reign of Jesus Christ in one word:—Jesus Christ is the legitimate sovereign of souls.

To say this, is especially to say that He only exercises an empire by consent, freely accepted by a people possessed of free will. Any idea of constraint is contradictory to the idea of the reign of Jesus Christ.³

There are in man three powers, which come in turn to the foot of His cross, to render to Him

* Psalm ii. 6, 8, 10, 12.

the free homage of absolute submission. These three powers constitute man. Whoever possesses them, possesses the soul itself. He is master of that kingdom.

Conscience is the first. It is the minister of justice in the internal government of our lives. It is this which proclaims the law of duty, and enjoins the accomplishment of it. It may be resisted, but not dethroned. It says to the creature: "Thou oughtest;—obey." It is the noblest and most precious relic of man, that sublime monument of the past which Cicero has so magnificently defined in his actual state, by calling him a mind in ruins. It is to this that our illustrious compatriot Jean-Jacques Rousseau bore witness in these immortal words: "Conscience, conscience! divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice; sure guide of an ignorant and shallow, yet intelligent and free being; infallible judge of good and evil, which renders man like to God. Thou art the cause of the excellence of his nature and the morality of his actions. Without

thee, I know of nothing that will raise me above the beasts, except the melancholy privilege of falling into error after error by the aid of an understanding without a guide, and a reason without principles."

But at the foot of the cross every conscience bows down, and has no wish but to be a docile interpreter of the evidence which subjugates it. It is silent, for it is endeavouring to comprehend a new lesson which will supersede all others. This extraordinary Being, crowned with righteousness and infamy, dying because He loves us, dying because we do not love Him, captivates, moves, and troubles it, and draws forth sighs and tears. We have seen the sinner weep in shame and remorse, but the righteous, or he who thought himself so, weeping tears of repentance and love; it required the cross of Jesus Christ to give such a spectacle to the world.

Now, some power of God stirs up the most ancient memories, the most hidden thoughts, the secret things of the soul, in such a manner as

to cover with confusion the conscience of apparently the most exemplary lives. Count up the penitents who come here to smite upon their breasts. You will meet together with the lowest among men, the first among saints, and it will not be the latter who will shed the least bitter tears. You will no longer hear each one accusing his brother, but each accusing himself, as if desirous of finding himself the most guilty, of obeying a novel sort of emulation. And really this must be a strange spectacle to those who have not the key to it. Here is St. Paul, the most righteous and exemplary of the model Pharisees, with the best opinion of himself, and blessing God for his virtues. He meets upon his way with the cross of Jesus Christ; immediately he begins to speak of himself as the chief of sinners, sold under sin, one in whom dwelleth no good thing. And how often this has been reproduced. As often as a soul is awakened to salvation by the only name given amongst men, Jesus Christ crucified, and in exact proportion to

the earnestness and sincerity of the look fixed upon Him.

But do not suppose that He wounds consciences to break them. Another prodigy. He only wounds in order to heal, just as a spirited horse can only be trained by being subdued.

We said not long ago that there is no true holiness here below, but a crucified holiness. Before the cross of Jesus Christ this truth is made plain to the conscience with the force of a revelation or of a discovery, which suddenly takes possession of it, and opens to it the prospect of being raised up and perfected.

It passes in review the cruel drama of Calvary, enters into it, takes part in it, and longs to share the sorrows of the Man of Sorrows by being crucified with Him. It longs to use the bold expression of St. Paul: "To fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ."*

And in proportion as it plunges into this sacred source, it learns in turn renunciation, by associating

* Col i. 24.

itself with the abasement of the Son of Man ; submission, by associating itself with voluntary submission ; the spirit of sacrifice, by associating itself with this complete gift of Himself. As Christ abases Himself, not by rejecting life but by sanctifying it, the disciple will learn to use this world as not abusing it, will know how to bear poverty or riches, how to be abased and how to abound, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. As Christ submitted to what was apparently the most unjust dispensation, not as to a blind necessity, but as to the wise will of His Father, the disciple will see in everything the holy will of the supreme Lord of circumstances ; and by the spirit in which he will accept the most mysterious trials, he will know how to make them conduce to his good no less surely than the richest blessings.

As Christ summed up His entire work in the gift of Himself, as He gave His life an oblation for His own, and did not shrink from death to save them from condemnation, the disciple will

feel himself by degrees detached from self; he will understand that charity consists in giving his life, and that in Christ no man liveth to himself, but to Christ; that is to say, for those suffering members of His body whom He has left us to seek out, to solace, and to save.

We shall see at length what was never yet seen. We shall see the saint; an image always more or less imperfect of a reality which presents itself to the mind with perfect precision. Where is the Christian so little advanced that he does not say in the depths of his soul: "To me to live is Christ?"

Ah! we are far enough indeed, no doubt, from this life, which is Christ. But, however far the idea may be raised above us, in the recesses of our minds, in our highest aspirations and our thoughts, it appears clear, practicable, reasonable! I do not appeal only to confirmed Christians, I appeal to the indifferent, I appeal even to adversaries, and I draw from them this avowal, that Christ is the light which lighteth every man that

cometh into the world, a light which will never be surpassed. He is to the conscience what conscience is to man, He is the ruler of consciences, let us say He is the ruler Himself of humanity. He is seated upon the highest throne within us, He reigns, and will never be dethroned.

A second centre in us is the heart; rarely in accord with the conscience, indeed, habitually at war with it. Jesus did not establish His empire less legitimately over the heart; He reigns by love, after having conquered by repentance.

Have you ever reflected on the unique and touching phenomenon of the attachments which the Son of Man inspired for His name and person in the bosom of humanity. An illustrious orator, Lacordaire, struck with the ephemeral character of our affections, which even the best of them appear to be only abortive attempts, condemned to be dissolved sooner or later in the cold shadows of the sepulchre, has taken pleasure in bringing out in a page almost sublime, the different character of those which Jesus has

in all ages inspired. He says: "There is a Man whose ashes after eighteen centuries are not cold, and who is born again daily in the thoughts of an innumerable multitude of men. There is a Man whose steps are followed by a considerable portion of the human race without ever wearying, and who, entirely disappeared though He be, beholds Himself followed by this crowd into all the scenes of His former pilgrimage. There is a Man, dead and buried, whose sleeping and waking are watched, whose every word vibrates still, and produces more than love—produces virtues which fructify in love. There is a Man who was fastened, ages ago, to a gibbet, yet millions of adorers take Him down every day from the throne of His execution, kneel before Him, prostrate themselves so low that the blood rushes to their faces, and kiss His bleeding feet with invincible ardour. There is a Man beaten, killed, crucified, whom an unspeakable passion resuscitates from death and infamy to enthrone Him in the glory of an unfailing love, which

finds in Him, peace, honour, joy, even to ecstasy. There is a Man pursued in His execution and in His tomb by an inextinguishable hatred, and who, asking for apostles and martyrs among all posterity, finds apostles and martyrs in the bosom of all generations. In a word, there is a Man, and He is the only one who has founded His love upon earth; and this Man, it is Thou, O Jesus—whose name, at this moment, moves me to tenderness, and draws from me these accents which trouble me and which I do not comprehend.”

This is the fact. It strikes us so little, because we are so accustomed to contemplate it. But a moment's attention will render it wonderful.

To gain a heart, is it not one of the most rare and difficult things? To gain the heart of one man; to obtain an affection, not only of caprice or interest, but the permanent gift, the entire sacrifice of a heart—can we hope ever really to attain it? Imagine yourself the object of this enterprise. Your heart is the conquest

to which one of your fellows aspires. What art must he not employ in his approaches! How you will bargain for yourself. What inward reserves you will make, inclining only to give yourself conditionally, always ready to take yourself back, which is really not to give yourself at all. Then, how many influences will come afterwards to wear out the sentiment; time, habit, absence, presence, weariness, deception, reciprocal exigencies. Let us make our confessions without reserve, to bring out the glory of the Saviour, who claims as His own the entire, the absolute gift of our hearts, the heart of every man in every age, and who succeeds in obtaining them in the exact measure in which He succeeds in convincing their consciences of sin, and in raising them by sanctifying them.

But what attractions, what charms, what resources unknown before, does He employ to work this prodigy? What attractions? Does it not appear as if He had engaged to clash with all the inclinations, and to succeed against all the

rules of love? The prophet said of Him: "There is no beauty that we should desire him."* Never was anything more truly said, to judge by the natural and ordinary course of things. Men love that which recalls the pleasures of sense; He presents to them only images of mortification and suffering. Men love beauty; He presents to them a spectacle of horror. Men love success, triumph; He offers them the spectacle of a most humiliating defeat. And, nevertheless, the heart of man is thus made. Beauty is a great thing; but there is something for the heart of man above the most striking beauty. Natural affection is a great thing; but there is something for the heart of man above the most natural and tender affection. There is something for the mother above her child; there is something for the wife above her husband. Enthusiasm for genius is a grand thing; we press upon the steps of great men, we regard them with an admiration almost superstitious; but there

* Isaiah liii. 2.

is something for the heart of man greater than the halo of the greatest men in the greatest prestige of their glory. And what is this, then, for the heart of man which is above everything else? Above everything else, my brethren, there is the Crucified One. But above Thee, O Jesus, for the heart of man, there is nothing.

It is well known how this consideration struck the Emperor Napoleon, who so well understood men. In the solitude of St. Helena, reviewing the past and meditating on the history of the most illustrious of the heroes of antiquity, and comparing the sentiments which they inspired with those which Jesus Christ inspired, he found the contrast so great that he required nothing more to convince him of the divine and supernatural character of Jesus Christ. He says: "The Christ speaks, and henceforth generations attach themselves to Him, by bonds closer and more intimate than those of blood, by a union more sacred and more imperious than any other union whatever.

“He lights the torch of a love which causes self-love to die, which prevails above every other love. The founders of other religions had not even an idea of this mystic love, which constitutes the essence of Christianity under the beautiful name of charity. It is because they were not inclined to run themselves aground. It is because in the task of making himself beloved, man has a profound conviction of his powerlessness. Thus, without contradiction, the greatest miracle of Christ is the reign of love. All those who sincerely believe in Him, feel this wonderful supernatural love; inexplicable phenomenon, impossible to the reason or strength of man; sacred fire kindled upon earth by this new Prometheus, of which time, the great destroyer, can neither lessen the force nor limit the duration.

“As for me, Napoleon, this is what I admire the most, because I have often thought of it, and this is what proves conclusively to me the divinity of Christ.”

At length, the last power of man, that of the

mind, follows the two others, to pay homage to Jesus Christ. I say follows, intentionally.

I know that in announcing this third sovereignty of the Son of Man, I shall probably provoke a smile of incredulity from more than one of my hearers. What! He the master of the intellect, who said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," who chose fishermen and ignorant men for His first disciples. Who said Himself of His doctrine: "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!" It is supposed that because Jesus Christ did not disdain the most humble beings, that He Himself merits the contempt which superior minds are pleased to bestow on the immense majority of their fellow-men. This is because we do not reflect that it is the most uncommon and clearest sign of a truly royal intellect, to comprehend all minds, in order to illuminate them with the same light.

Do not remind me of your philosophers, and the profundity of their conceptions, for it is precisely

in the inaccessible profundity of their conceptions that I find the most palpable testimony to their powerlessness in the arduous enterprise of founding intellectual sovereignty. These famous words of one of those who have been called the masters of modern thought, are well known. When on his death-bed, surrounded by his most illustrious disciples, he said to them, with sadness: "I carry one regret with me to the grave,—that of having been understood by but one man in the world; and he only half understood me." Is this what you call subduing minds and founding the universal empire of thought?

And observe, that these are not mere casual words. Under an appearance of simplicity, they express a general truth, and every philosopher might say as much, even by reason of the depth and originality of his conceptions.

The most sage of sages, Socrates, leaves a representative of his ideas, Plato, who comprehends him in a manner, and modifies him according to his liking; he leaves behind him again a dis-

ciple, Aristotle, who subjects him to a new process of transformation, which his disciples, in their turn, take up, until the most diverse, opposite, and adverse schools—the black and white, in fact—appear upon the theatre of philosophy as the contradictory fruits of the tree which the first planted. The fact is, that everyone developing his own powers, and following the bent of his genius, makes a kingdom of his own thoughts, where he reigns, no doubt, but as a solitary monarch; every one sheds around him a relative light, tinted with the personality of his genius, imperfectly received by the first whom he enlightens, and of a nature that will inevitably be changed in contact with other minds; everyone, as is natural, takes himself as the point of departure, and wishing in his turn to construct an edifice, glories in building upon the ruins of his predecessors. Hence this flux and reflux of human thought, oscillating perpetually between the invisible poles by which eternal wisdom has seen fit to limit it, as it set bounds to the ocean; hence those gigantic evolutions which

the ages are ever making, never wearying but never arriving at a definite conclusion, where the mind might at length find equilibrium and repose. Magnificent spectacle, true Titanic labour, both from the prodigious efforts which it presupposes, and the prodigious relapses to which it is periodically subjected in its vain attempt to scale the heavens.

Heaven, the heaven of thought as well as of all the rest; repose in the truth; heaven, this is what Jesus gives, but He gives it to all with equal liberality. He reveals it in the light of day.

The privilege of the simple—and do not disdain it—will be to attain it by repairing to Him. The privilege of genius—and do not disdain that either—will be to attain it under His guidance, by applying to it the vast resources of the greatest intellects. You will see the school of Jesus Christ collected together, repeating the same lesson, which at the same time satisfies and delights the noble faculty of thought; and you will see the simple artizan, whose mind is just

awaking, and the profound doctor of this age, whose mind is reposing after his labours, learning to stammer it together. How often have the experiences of St. Augustine been repeated since his time. It was a common thing in the early ages of the church to see wearied intellects, after having tried in turn all schemes of philosophy, come and take refuge humbly in the words of Jesus Christ, like weather-beaten mariners coming into port after a storm.

If the ministers of Jesus Christ understood their task better, if in a peaceable and faithful spirit, having at the same time a respect for human thought, they knew better how to testify of the deep satisfaction, the pure and ineffable joys that intercourse with Jesus Christ procures for the noblest faculties of the mind, who can tell but that in our age, so similar in many respects to the age of the decadence of Greece and Rome, our tormented age condemned to the forced labour of a sterile thought, we might not see that miraculous fishing renewed, which, in rescuing so many

disheartened geniuses from the shipwreck of false wisdom, give to the Church her most brilliant lights and most firm supports.

Yes, there is a noble labour, a sacred labour of thought; there is a perilous, but always legitimate and laudable ambition to exercise the pure faculties of the intellect in the search for, and meditation on truth. Do not let us discourage this spirit, even when it loses its way. To discourage mind is to encourage matter, it is to commit a crime against humanity. But let us insist by our teaching, by our example, by our calm and enviable possession of the truth, that Jesus is not less a master in this domain than in the others. It has been admirably said, that great thoughts come from the heart; is it not natural that the queen of thoughts should proceed from this royal heart, to which all hearts feel constrained to render homage?

It could not be but that in demanding our hearts He should also demand our minds. What He wishes, in order that He may establish His

reign, is not the abdication of reason (take care not to think so, take care not to suggest such an idea), but the abdication of the personal sense, of a selfish spirit, the abdication of pride, presumption, prejudice, of pre-occupation with earthly things, of all that enslaves the mind or gives it a false direction. It is not slavery that He offers us, He has said Himself it is emancipation: "The truth shall make you free." * And let not the words deceive you. The true free-thinkers are not those who are at war with Jesus Christ. Let not appearances deceive you either! People talk to-day about the defeat of Jesus Christ on the battle-field of ideas. Do you, then, imagine that you will be assisting at the first of these senseless revolts? Do you not suppose that in the last century, in the age of *renaissance*, in the age of the gnostics, in every age, there have been vain intellectual enterprises against this illuminator of the intellect?—clouds which have passed over the face of the sun without dimming

* John viii. 32.

its brightness or turning it for an instant from its majestic course. You will hear pretended sages crying upon the house-tops, that Christianity has had its day; you will hear the schools of scepticism deny that there is any truth; you will hear the materialistic schools deny that there is any spirit; you will hear the pantheistic schools deny God. When it is true that the evil is as widely spread as the noise it makes, make a careful search; you will find somewhere a child on its knees repeating "Our Father!" This child preserves the depôt of truth for the philosophers and profound thinkers of the future.

Jesus is the centre. We wander for a time about the circumference, but whether we will or not, we always return to Him. The mind of man has taken this bent, and will retain it.

Thus, the three powers within us render homage to the Son of Man, like three ministers who bow down to the legitimate sovereign. But do you know what this triple and free homage of the conscience, the heart, and the mind is? This is

what is called adoration. When man has offered that, he has offered all. He has offered himself. And such is the nature of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Man has found his God again, in finding such a man. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Jesus Christ are the same thing in the language of the Gospel.

To have determined the nature of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, is to determine the duration of it, for an empire founded on the mind of man is an empire founded upon a rock. As long as man is man, as long as there is within him this triple base of the conscience, the heart, and the mind, Jesus will be the King of it. The shortcomings of the kingdom of Christ will henceforth be the shortcomings of humanity, and the triumphs of the reign of Christ will be the progress and triumphs of humanity itself.

It has been well said of those who have become celebrated conquerors of history, that it was the art or the genius, with which they possessed themselves of the aspirations and the genius of

the people, which led to the accomplishment of their ambitious designs. Nothing can resist a nation which is incarnate in a man; nothing can resist a man who is for the time the head and the heart, the living representative of a nation. Let him be called Alexander or Napoleon, he will obtain prodigies of those who devote themselves to him because they see themselves glorified in him. And it requires nothing less than the greatest errors, and the most unheard-of catastrophes, to break the charm of the magical alliance which might otherwise almost threaten the equilibrium of the world. What, then, will not be the superhuman power of Him who has succeeded in possessing Himself, not of a people and its ephemeral schemes to lead it on to the senseless objects of a personal ambition, but of the human mind itself in its permanent condition, to lead it, by regenerating it, to the conquest of its legitimate glory and its immortal elevation? Obstacles will doubtless present themselves, gigantic, incessant, and threatening. The prince of this

world wishes to retain his prey, and puts everything in train to prevent its being taken from him. But the enterprise is conceived in such a manner that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and man will disappear from the earth before he will defeat the victorious plans of the Son of Man.

Hence this astonishing spectacle which is presented by the history of the human race, the unique history of the establishment and the development of the reign of Jesus Christ. Here is a power against which everything rises up, and which triumphs naturally, and with majestic superiority. Here, for the first time, is a power which borrows nothing from the ordinary methods by which power is established, and which has nothing to fear from the ordinary enemies by which every earthly power is sooner or later destroyed.

The first of these means, the first of these enemies is force. Empires are founded upon force, until force overturns them. Such was Rome,

this monster of iron, which, for a moment, nearly attained to crushing the whole world under its weight, and which appears to have received from Providence the mandate of existence, but to put to the proof at the time of its greatest power, the people of Christ at the time of their greatest weakness. What were the first armies of the Crucified One when they spread themselves over the earth? A handful of sheep sent forth in the midst of wolves, a few men dispersed abroad, artizans by trade, calling themselves the weak things of the world, the offscouring of the world, the things which are not; raising up against themselves, in the first steps that they took, the most frightful, destructive machine, which had ever been seen on the earth. They are seized, beaten, are about to disappear—but no, the party is not equal. Tertullian has said: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” Weakness will prevail. Two centuries of persecution, and Rome will count more Christians than soldiers in her empire. Eighteen centuries of effort—

eighteen centuries, during which the trial has been repeated—and strength at last will let her arms fall down by her side, saying: “I give it up.” Do you allege that the Church, in its worst days, has sometimes tried to use the weapon of which she ought to have known nothing but the threats and blows? Ah! when she tried to support herself by force, she ran the risk of greater perils than she ever suffered from it.

And if she wishes to assure her triumphs in the world, she must become as she was in her early days, the weak thing of the world, suffering, submissive, but free, as the soul is free when she believes.

The second means by which established powers on earth recommend themselves, the second enemy which sooner or later menaces them, is prestige; that which dazzles the eyes, astonishes the mind, carries the imagination captive; the prestige of art, of skill, of learning. All the false religions have had their prestige, until the day when, it having disappeared, their priests could

not look each other in the face without laughing. Do you ask what is the prestige of the religion which is called Christianity? Its sole prestige has been to have none.

Its most astonishing feature, and what will always be the most surprising when it is closely examined, is its simplicity, its extraordinary, not to say offensive simplicity. What does it offer to the sight, what does it offer to the imagination, or to the intellect? Look closely at it. It offers the bleeding image of the Crucified One, which was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, and which its adversaries have always represented as ridiculous or odious. There it is, nevertheless. It is on this that the eyes must be fixed, and to this the attention must be directed. There, according to the expression of St. Paul, is His wisdom; the wisdom of God, it is true, and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

Do not stumble at the almost heathen pomp

* I Rom. i. 16.

with which so considerable a portion of Christianity encumbers its worship. I agree that it is prestige, but a threatening prestige, a prestige which would have been a thousand times stifled without the hidden virtue, which made it rise up for our fathers from this gilded coffin, and does not permit it to perish absolutely, even for those who are still led astray by its false traditions.

Do not stumble either at the deafening echoes of so many celebrated speculations, ancient and modern, which, during the course of ages, have disputed its name. This is a prestige too, the prestige of science falsely so called, which, in every age and in every form, has tried to introduce error into the sanctuary, and up to the very throne of truth, and which would have succeeded a thousand times, if the soul of man, ever the same with its profound needs, had not been there to reclaim its possession, while the King was there to preserve it for him.

In a world which only lives, as it seems, for *éclat* and novelty, what seductions have not been

tried against the austere ascendancy of Jesus Christ, and what attempts have not been made to draw away the hearts which attach themselves to Him! But a power, stronger than all the power of seduction, always has dissipated, and always will dissipate, as in sport, the deceptive mirages which every age has endeavoured to oppose to it, both in the world of mind and in the world of sense.

Time, to which Jesus Christ owes nothing, because He appeared from the first day such as He will be to the end (and though everything in time was prepared for His coming, nothing in time explains it, because it was produced by nothing)—time, which founded nothing, will destroy nothing. Have you ever reflected on the attitude of time in relation to Jesus Christ? It is a very striking thing!

Time, the great enemy, as it has been called by a celebrated diplomatist; this slow thunderbolt, which, as has been said again, spares nothing; time, which wears out everything, ruins everything, buries everything, empires as well as

systems, the monuments of thought as well as the monuments of stone; time, when it meets Jesus Christ, is at a stand, he has recognised a master, and suddenly changes all his ways. For the first and last time, he employs himself on what he had never made. One thing is confided to him which will not grow old in his hands. He will take care himself to preserve for it the brilliance of unfading youth. Here is something of which, for the first time, assuredly, it may be said that in the keeping of time, although it grows old it never ceases to be new. Here is something—Jesus Christ and His church—which time will henceforth bear lovingly over the torrents of ages, to deposit it intact on the shores of eternity, as the waters of the deluge bore the ark over the abysses which engulfed the ruins of the old world. What can I more say? Here is something which time itself increases daily without altering, bringing to it unceasingly new reinforcements and fresh supports. All the progress, all the conquests of civilisation, serve the reign of Jesus Christ, which

in its turn accelerates the onward march of humanity, henceforth chained to the car of its destinies. Continue, then, your labours, all ye agents of progress in human society! Continue your labours ye learned men, consume your lives in night watches; penetrate by your calculations into the splendours of the firmament; descend into the bowels of the earth; extract from nature her secrets, describe her wonders to us, let us know more of the admirable harmony which presides over her laws.

Labour on ye working men, bring classes and nations nearer together; discover more rapid means of conquering space and publishing thought; you will only be giving new wings to that angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth!*

Labour on, ye learned men, grow pale over your books; teach us the languages of all nations, their manners, their traditions, the *souvenirs* of their past and their aspirations for the future.

* Rev. xiv. 6.

Labour on you also who preside over the commerce of the world. Send your fleets over the seas; henceforth you will not bring the riches which corrupt without taking in exchange the riches which consist in life eternal.

Work on, then, all creatures together; the Son of Man enrolled you when He enrolled the soul of man. Work, work! There is no one on earth who is not a labourer in His kingdom, and a soldier in His conquests.

We also, my brethren—and, let it be well known, we especially—rejoice in the true progress of light, and in all fruitful employment of human activity. We applaud it with sincere joy of heart, we urge it forward with all our strength. Those are blind who do not perceive the direct connexion which unites the cause of Jesus Christ with every movement of life on the face of our planet. They work at it themselves, no doubt, in their own fashion, but like the dyke, which only restrains the torrent on condition of precipitating its course. When Rome tried to set bounds to

thought, she caused the blessed Reformation to break forth. If we try once more to fetter the legitimate aspirations of humanity, we shall again prepare the way for some unexpected triumph in the sacred work of enfranchising humanity, and its regeneration in Jesus Christ. So true it is that all things work together for good to those whom God has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. So true it is that the day is coming, it draws near, it is here, when, according to the prophecies of the Old as well as of the New Testament, all nations will bow down before the Saviour of the world, and the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

But why do we speak of earth? Earth is only a place of waiting and preparation. It is not here that the eternal destinies of humanity will be fulfilled. Christ is risen! Man survives death with Him. Let us open the gates of the temple of the future.

“After death, the judgment,” says St. Paul.

And Jesus Christ Himself speaks in these terms of this solemn and supreme manifestation of His reign.

“When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”*

Figures of speech, do you say?

Yes, my brethren, grand and solemn figures, representing the greatest and most solemn reali-

* Matt. xxv. 31—34, 41, 46.

ties. Let us respect these figures which God Himself has traced for us, not being able by reason of our infirmities to make us understand without them. Judgment, throne, books opened, sentences pronounced and followed by eternal accomplishment, these are sublime monuments of the future, as the narratives of the creation and the fall are sublime monuments of the past. Let them be engraved upon our minds, let us constantly fix our attention upon them as upon the prospect of the most solemn moment of our lives. It is only some most frivolous, or most superficial minds, who under a pretext of some spurious spirituality, repudiate these striking impressions and these urgent precepts.

Besides, do you not feel what imposing realities are hidden, or, if you like it better, displayed, beneath the mantle of these prophetic revelations? It is in face of these realities that I place myself, and there I wish to leave you, before saying Amen to these discourses, which God will bring to an end to-day.

In the first place, I see shine forth the sovereign and eternal glory of Him whom, with the Scriptures, we have hitherto called the Son of Man, but to whom the Scriptures give also another name, for they call Him indifferently the Son of God.

Faithful to our programme, we have strictly confined ourselves to the study of the human character and destiny of Jesus Christ; although, no doubt, you have more than once been on the point of allowing the exclamation of adoration to escape you, which I wished to reserve for the moment when our subjugated souls could no longer suppress it. Now the veil is rent. Our eyes are opened. Who, then, is He whom you contemplate on the throne of judgment to come, consecrated to this supreme and supernatural ministry by these words: "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?"* Is He a man? Yes, doubtless,

* John v. 22, 23.

but what a man! You know Him henceforth, you have read His mind and followed His steps in the path of life.

You have seen the perfection of His righteousness, the mystery of His sufferings, the triumph of His resurrection. Who is this Man to whom every man must look in order to live? Who is this Man, unique among men? Who is this Man, whose name alone, given to or taken from the world, makes light or darkness, holiness or corruption, hope or despair, life or death? Is not this a truly extraordinary and manifestly supernatural humanity? Man in every age, in every place, has found at once his Model, his Master, his Judge, his Saviour, his King, his all, one to whom he owes heart, and mind, and soul, for time and for eternity. Must we not bow the knee, and veil our faces, exclaiming like the incredulous apostle, after the resurrection: "My Lord and my God?"

This conclusion arrived at, the Son of Man reigns. I see no premises to reason from other

than those placed by St. John in the frontispiece of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

That humanity should one day, without knowing it, have given birth to the Sage of sages, the Saint of saints, the King of kings, to whom it finds itself irrevocably united by the bonds of a natural and eternal dependence, is this a prodigy more easily explained, than that which in our ignorance we call the incarnation? Will intelligence be for a moment in suspense, between such a miracle of chance and the wise intervention of love? I have only wished to see Thy humanity, O my Saviour, and it has brought me to my knees before the throne of Thy glory.

Do not ask me how this is to be explained, or how it takes place; I cannot tell you, I do not

* John i. 2, 14.

know, but I adore. I do not know, but I bow down before something which in those heights where thought is powerless, remains clear to my eyes with a certainty of faith which is equal to evidence. Before something which everything demonstrates to me, and without which I should henceforth doubt everything.

Jesus Christ fills the world of spirits; He is the centre, the summit, the life and the light. It is He consequently who fills all things for man, up to the limits of this present life, and at His appearance on the threshold of immortality, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, waiting until He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.*

But, my brethren, if the power of judging has been conferred on Him, in order to manifest His glory on the confines of eternity, and that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; there is a profound meaning in that

* 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

declaration of Scripture, that the power of judgment has been committed to Him because He is the Son of Man; that is to say, as a normal and natural consequence of His work of redemption accomplished on the earth. This is the confirmation of the royalty that He has acquired.

It is part of the idea of this royalty that it can be resisted. It is over minds that its authority is exercised; that is to say, upon free wills, free to submit, free to refuse.

There are those who have known Jesus Christ from their infancy; there are those who have been followed during the whole of their lives by the most pressing appeals; there are those who have been inundated with that brilliant light which He sheds in floods on our paths, and who, nevertheless, have closed their eyes, preferring darkness to light; there are those even who under His eye, and so to speak in His society, have hardened themselves like Judas, forsaken Him like Demas, or turned a deaf ear like the multitude.

Then, there is a category, doubtless, too nu-

merous, of Christians in name, who cling to life and tremble at the thought of death. And what, then, do they so much fear in death? Ah! it appears to me that what they have to fear above everything is meeting with Jesus Christ. For them to meet Jesus Christ is to meet the evidence of their own condemnation. Is it not to meet at the same time all the remembrances of His mercy, and remorse for their own impenitence? Is it not to meet the certainty that they themselves, by their own fault, are the authors of their own ruin? Unhappy beings! You have seen His face, you have heard His words, full of grace and truth. Your conscience spoke, your heart was moved, your reason was ready to surrender, you might, by a sincere conversion and by a true sanctification, have united yourselves to Him, have been changed into the same image from glory to glory. You did not wish it! You preferred darkness, sin, death; you preferred perdition, you will find that which you have sought. The Son of Man has but one thing to say to you: "I know you

not. Depart from me!" He reigns, but there are two faces to His royalty. He has a terrible face, and it is that which concerns you.

But He has above all an adorable face. And how full of sweetness the thought of Jesus Christ appears to me to be, for those who have learnt on earth to say: "To me to live is Christ," and who have, as the Apostle expresses it, "Loved his appearing." To meet Jesus Christ, to see Him, to hear Him, after having loved Him so much; to see Him better than we see with our eyes, to hear Him better than we hear with our ears. To meet Jesus Christ after having so much desired Him. To be with Him where He is for eternity, to plunge with Him into the oceans of life and love. To meet with Jesus Christ after He has been the peace, the joy, the inexhaustible satisfaction of the soul—it is to have found heaven itself. And how well I comprehend the holy rapture of St. Paul when he exclaims: "I desire to depart and to be with Christ;"* "Who shall separate us

* Phil. i. 23.

from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

To meet Jesus Christ, is as you see, the judgment. It is salvation or perdition, life or death. Behold, then, Him that “declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness.” “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”† To meet Jesus is the most solemn moment of a solemn eternity.

What remains for me to say to you, if it is not that to hear the words of Jesus Christ, to learn to know Jesus Christ, to come into contact with Him, is the most solemn thing of the present life. We have together applied ourselves to it. You and I have been led by the goodness of God to turn our thoughts towards this Divine Saviour. According to His promise, He has been with us and has

* Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

† Amos iv. 12, 13.

made us feel His presence. Have not our hearts more than once burned within us by the way, like those of the disciples of Emmaus, on this path that we have trodden with Him? Yes, O Jesus, our eyes have seen Thee, our consciences have acknowledged Thee, our souls have exclaimed: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."*

Is it possible that we can deny Thee now, and only increase our own condemnation?

No, it is not possible. Will you not say so, my brethren? We shall not separate without having engaged to be faithful to Him in life and in death. And God, who has begun in us this good work, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.† Amen!

* John vi. 68.

† Phil. i. 6.

THE
TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED 27TH SEPTEMBER, 1867,

AT THE

INAUGURATION OF

LA SALLE DE LA RÉFORMATION,

AT GENEVA.

BY

FRANK COULIN, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH OF GENEVA.



THE

TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.



I AM come here to speak of the Teaching of Jesus Christ. As to the problem which the opening of this Hall recalls, the problem of the evangelisation of the masses of the people by the ministry of the Word, it has appeared to us natural to begin by humbly placing ourselves before the example of the Saviour. Before His example—but in the first place before His person.

Yes, to Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, the Word made Flesh, the eternal Word, who “took upon him the form of a servant, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even

the death of the cross,"* "be glory, and honour, and thanks" for ever and ever. Amen. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;"† "He is the beginning and the ending,"‡ "the way, the truth, and the life."§

The work which He accomplished during the short years of His life and the infinite hours of His passion, is so great and so closely united in all its parts, that it may seem rash to analyse it and to make any distinctions in it.

But do not fear. The least of the sun's rays pays homage to the sun himself. It is impossible to study one detail, one aspect of the Saviour's life, without being led to look at it as a whole, in its nature at once divine and human, as His work of redemption. He did not fear to reveal Himself gradually. He began by descending into the lowest parts of the earth, like the humblest of men, and it was by a gentle and imperceptible ascent that He led His disciples gradually up out

Phil. ii. 7, 8. † Acts iv. 12. ‡ Rev. i. 8. § John xiv. 6.

of our vale of misery to the shining summits, where they could behold His glory in His eternal beauty.

Shall we, in speaking of the teaching of Jesus Christ, be putting Him on a level with those human teachers, whom He Himself too justly described as blind leaders of the blind? By no means. In this respect, as in all others, to compare Him, is to show how incomparable He is. Jesus spake, and God be praised for it, for "never man spake like this man." And since He did speak, His words remain for His disciples the rule for all speaking, as His example will ever be the realised type of all true holiness.

Before entering on the subject, there is a preliminary remark, the austere and melancholy evidence of which should be frankly brought forward, in order to dispel all illusion and to establish us at once on the firm basis of truth. Our hearts are saddened by the sight of society tainted, like all other human society, alas! by the malady of sin, under its infinitely diverse and

lamentable forms. Unbelief, immorality, the darkness of perdition, prevail among the multitudes who escape us, and who are sinning, suffering, dying around us. The preaching of the Word, no doubt, arrests some, but it seems to us not to reach the masses, and it attracts but a very limited number of souls, when we want to gain all. We flatter ourselves, that with new means, we shall obtain fresh results. But do not let us flatter ourselves too much. All that it was possible to do, for the spread of the words of eternal life, was done by Jesus Christ. Moved with compassion at the sight of that crowd, which, like all other crowds in His time and in ours, filled the cities and peopled the country, it was to the people that His most tender, most pressing, and most popular appeals were addressed; He tried to reach all consciences, to gain them for the kingdom of heaven; but His words were heeded by but a small number, and the places most favoured by His teaching, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, have rendered

themselves famous by the disappointments He met with in them. Let us take heed to this. The Master Himself met with insurmountable obstacles, not only with a few, but with the larger number. He, the first among teachers, notwithstanding the apparently irresistible force of His gentleness and authority, saw invincible obstacles rising up around Him. Self-righteousness, which His spirit could not convince of sin, frivolous minds, on which the earnestness of His appeals made no impression, hearts so hard that the sword of the Word could not pierce them, even when wielded by His divine hands. When He went forth to sow, for one seed that fell upon good ground, four were lost among thorns or by the wayside. Did He not Himself point out the multitude pursuing the broad path that leads to destruction? Did He not exclaim: "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?"* Do not let us be surprised, then,

* John iii. 19.

if it is the same now. If all our efforts to gather together the children of our beloved country were to fail, we could not weep more bitter tears over Geneva, than Jesus wept over the city that killed the prophets. This is the heroic state of the Church, ever since she has had a crucified Master for her head. She knows that she will never triumph upon earth, yet that she must never give way to despair.

This said, and this reservation made, it was nevertheless by preaching that Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and by preaching that He ordained the propagation of it in the world. Having preached Himself, He sent His disciples to preach after Him, and it is to us as well as to them that He issued the command: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* We cannot refuse to obey it without condemning ourselves. But, if we feel ourselves unequal to the task, our resource will always be to go humbly to Him, and say: "Master, teach us to preach."

* Mark xvi. 15.

There was no assumption of greatness either in the mind or the preaching of Jesus Christ; this word that "shall not pass away;" there was nothing of mystery either in His views or in His person. There was in Him, according to the prediction of Isaiah, "no form, nor comeliness, and no beauty that we should desire him."* If the sages of the world have sometimes tried to attract attention and insure a welcome by a prestige of attitude, costume, or external things, there was nothing like it with Him. He is so simple and natural, and aims so little at effect, even amongst the Jews, accustomed to see their teachers clothed in flowing robes with broad phylacteries, and speaking from Moses' seat, that we might sometimes be scandalised by it. Thus, we learn, that when He returned to Nazareth, the town of His childhood, and undertook to teach in the synagogue, some one who recognised Him, said: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"†

After long years passed in obscurity, and without,

* Isaiah liii. 2.

† Matt. xiii. 55.

as it appears, in any way making known His future plans; arrived at a mature age, He went forth without any recommendation, a stranger to all the religious and political parties of His time, habited like a simple artisan, and began by surrounding Himself by other simple artizans.

Though the prophet of the desert bore witness to Him, His witness was restricted to the narrow circle of His first adherents. We know now the idea which filled His soul, and which was to fill His life. He who came to seek and to save that which was lost, to reveal the Father in heaven, and to found the kingdom of God upon earth, had indeed something to say. Nevertheless, this idea, which ages will not suffice to unroll to its whole extent, was only brought to light gradually, naturally, providentially, without either precipitation or hesitation, and in accordance with circumstances. This life, so short but so full, is, properly speaking, nothing but the free development of a soul which expands and devotes itself day by day, until it was offered up entirely at Golgotha. And

as it expanded in action, so also it expanded in teaching.

Speaking is too often, even with the best of men, a difficulty, an effort. In the case of Jesus—and this is one trait of His perfection—words rise up and flow from His soul, as a spring from its source. They radiate, as it were, from truth, to enlighten us; a halo of eternal life surrounds Him; and as He goes on His way, it illumines with a divine light everything in this life, from its most humble to its most solemn scenes. When He enters the hospitable abode at Bethany, a woman is so eager to entertain Him, that she forgets everything else, even her soul: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.”* These are words of life eternal; such as you will also find in the Sermon on the Mount, in the parables, in the last instructions to the Apostles, in the prayer at Gethsemane, in the

* Luke x. 41, 42.

cries of anguish at Golgotha; everywhere and always appropriate. I know nothing but the conscience that presents a distant analogy to such a method of teaching.

It is from this cause that the teaching of Jesus Christ, such as it has been preserved to us in the few pages that are called the Gospels, is presented to us under every imaginable form of language. First, under that of dialogue. He is sitting in the middle of the day on Jacob's well; a woman comes, with her pitcher on her shoulder. The Saviour is thirsty, and asks her to give Him drink. This is an opportunity for one of those casual conversations that we meet with at every step; for Him it was an opportunity to utter those profound but simple words, which were to awaken the conscience and open the mind and soul of the Samaritan woman, and of many others after her, to the comprehension of the true God, and of life eternal.

He has sought a night's repose in a grove of olive trees, near the gates of Jerusalem. A friendly but timid Pharisee comes in secret to

open his mind to Him. Perhaps it was the garden of Gethsemane; the leaves flutter in the breeze; you hear that incomparable lesson on the necessity of a new birth, effected by the Holy Spirit, in every soul which looks upon the Son of Man lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

If an order, a plan carefully conceived and followed out, is to be discovered in the Saviour's teaching, it is nowhere more evident than in that part of it clothed in the form of simple conversations. I should like to analyse if it were but a single one of these conversations, but time fails for such details. If one may use such expressions, what art and what faithfulness, what tact and what intense spiritual pre-occupation in these admirable *tête-à-tête*. With a grace and naturalness which never fails, He seems to pursue, with a holy jealousy, the double object of His ministry, to bear witness to the truth and to save the lost. He will doubtless know how to knock at the doors of a thousand hearts at once, when He has a

thousand hearts before Him, but when He has but one, whether it is that of a common-place woman, or of a refined Pharisee, it is then that He surpasses Himself, if indeed, the Saviour can surpass Himself.

My brethren, would you know one cause of the limited popularity of the preaching of the Gospel? Do you wish for advice which will cause it to penetrate into the minds of which the society around us is composed? Let us learn to mingle it better with our conversation. Does not conversation form a large part of the words which we utter? We who preach, well know the imperceptible influence our sermons produce compared with that produced by our conversation. Our sermons are always more or less prepared, or if not, they are supposed to be. Our conversation, on the contrary, is the most natural expression of our habitual state of mind. Now, it is this habitual state of mind that we must needs know, to appreciate at its true value the expression of our convictions.

Our sermons fall from too great a height, are too loud and too far between. They are like storms, when the rain strikes the ground as it falls, and glides over the surface. But to penetrate the parched and arid ground of the hearts of the multitudes around us, we must have those gentle, fine, continuous, irresistible rains, to which the blessed influence of our conversations might be compared, if instead of leaving them to the caprices of the moment, we knew how with fidelity and gentleness, according to the advice of St. Paul, to let them be always with grace, seasoned with salt.

If we look now at another form which the Saviour's teaching took, not less worthy of attention nor less applicable to ourselves, we shall find Him surrounded, not by a family (He renounced that when He left Nazareth), but by the group of His disciples. What an instructive study might be made of the relations of Jesus to those twelve Galileans, whom He took from their boats and their nets, to make them, to use His own ex-

pression, fishers of men, the spiritual conquerors of the earth.

What an admirable training He gave them, both in patience and in courage, during the three years which He seems to have measured out expressly with relation to them. What constant care, not only to ripen their faith and to guide them to attain their own salvation, but to mould them for the work of the ministry which He reserved for them in the world after Him. Never a moment lost. Without illusion, but without discouragement; without haste, but without weariness; He instructed, He exercised them, He combated and reformed their prejudices, He associated Himself with them, however unworthy they seemed of it; above all He attached them to Him, and caused them to say: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."*

Attentive to draw instruction from every circumstance, having them always in His thoughts,

* John vi. 68.

we might almost say that it was solely for them that He worked miracles and delivered His discourses. With the future always in view, He was continually casting into their minds the seeds of the most lofty thoughts, and even at the time when they were the furthest removed from such ideas, He prepared them for the most vast and sublime conceptions. You may see Him now walking with them on the roads of Galilee, talking to them by the way with ease and simplicity like a father to his children, always bringing forth good things out of the treasure in His heart.

Now He sends them to preach the Gospel of the kingdom without Him in order to exercise them, like an eagle teaching her brood to fly—then assembling them with Him in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, to give them His final instructions, celebrating a last Passover with them, communicating His spirit to them, causing, so to speak, His soul to pass into their souls, and gradually bringing them to that point when He

had nothing more to say to them than: "It is expedient for you that I go away."*"

Do you not suppose that the words of Christ would have taken a far less hold in the world, if He had not taken this special care to deposit them as living germs in the living souls of those who may be called His intimate friends? Come into the world to bear witness to the truth, He knew that His witness would be indefinitely multiplied and extended by the witness that others in their turn would bear to Him. He arranged and disposed beforehand the echoes which were to repeat again and again His words after Him. With His own hand He lighted the torches which were to preserve the light, and transmit it to future generations from age to age, till the end of time.

Bearing in mind the differences, and allowing every one to judge for himself how far the analogy exists (though it would be an exaggeration to insist on it too strongly), do we not find in this,

* John xvi. 7.

fresh instruction singularly applicable to us all. Have we not all our intimate friends, our family perhaps, or if not, a familiar circle among whom the least germ of faithfulness ought to make us carry on the work which we have at heart, each in his own way, and in accordance with his character?

If Jesus, who had all supernatural means at His disposal, had thought fit to dispense with this natural method, and had not trained disciples, we might say: It is quite intelligible. He did employ it, no doubt, to make us feel to what an extent He submitted to the conditions of humanity. (He did so entirely submit to them, that it did not rest with Him to prevent that among the number of the disciples, there should be, alas! a devil.) Does not His example speak aloud to us, and is there not the more reason why we should follow the same method? We wish to do a work of evangelisation in the world, then let us begin with our neighbours. We ask God to send labourers into His harvest; but they will not fall from

heaven, they must be found upon earth. Our children, our friends, the circle of those who gravitate around us, are part of the harvest, for it is a harvest of souls. It is for us to sow, to plant, to tend, and perhaps it will be given to them after us, to do that which we have tried in vain to accomplish. I am much mistaken if this subject does not make an earnest appeal to our consciences, and if it does not furnish the key to incalculable blessings, if not for to-day, at least in time to come.

I come now to the public speaking of Jesus Christ; for He, as you know, was called upon to speak to the multitude. The numberless benefits He conferred, His unflinching sympathy with all human sorrow, the confidence which His character and person inspired, the gentleness, the earnestness, the divine charm and divine authority of His teaching, caused Him to be surrounded by an increasing number of aspirants to the kingdom of heaven, who attached themselves to Him in crowds and followed Him everywhere.

This appeal: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, ye shall find rest to your souls;"* this appeal, which resounded through the towns and villages, passed from mouth to mouth, and which, so to speak, filled the air wherever He passed; this was the call by which, on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias or the hills of Galilee, He summoned around Him the varied and popular audience to whom He addressed those incomparable homilies, of which the type has been preserved for us in the Sermon on the Mount. There were not many of the rich among them, not many learned, but many exercised souls. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and others like them, were the disciples of the twilight. But in the light of day, we should have seen mostly the poor, the little ones, publicans and sinners; in a word, the real crowd, the people, the people who since His time have been destined to occupy an increasing place in human society, who threaten to escape us,

* Matt. vi. 28, 29.

but whom it is the ambition of us preachers to gather together and bring to His feet.

If it is in His character and in His daily devotedness that we must look for the secret of His popularity, the form which He so well knew how to give to His discourses was no less adapted to preserve His ascendancy. Who ever spoke their own language to the people, like the Son of Mary? Not, indeed, that He ever abated an iota of the austere exigencies of truth to bring it down to the level of what we should call inferior minds; but putting Himself as regards their experiences and their needs, on a level with the people, ignorant of their grandeur and nobility, He seized with a firm hand the natural links to which He afterwards attached the most sublime teaching.

Look at this multitude whom the Master has just made to sit down on the grass at His feet; they are the poor of the country—men, women, and children, the sick, men with broken hearts and troubled consciences, eyes wet with tears,

and hearts big with sighs, Nathaniels, Israelites in whom was no guile, faces exhibiting the candour of infantine simplicity. He casts a long and sympathetic look on these varied types of spiritual pre-occupation, and He is moved. At length His lips are opened. He begins with the words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: Blessed are they that mourn: Blessed are the meek: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."* Then, taking them by the hand, He makes them traverse in spirit the paths of the kingdom of heaven, leading them in turn into the most mysterious depths of conscience, and to the serene heights of communion with our Father in heaven.

When He speaks, we might often say that He does but serve as interpreter to the spirit within, and to nature without. He lends to the most distant echoes of conscience, to the most everyday scenes of life, to all creation, a language which will not cease to be heard as long as there

* Matt. v. 3, 4, 5, 6.

is a voice of God in the universe or a human soul to listen to it. Hence His admirable parables, a method of teaching the divine character which we have never sufficiently brought out. They bring to light, with a clearness which betrays omniscience, the profound accords which exist between these two domains of God's government, the realm of nature and the realm of grace. They inundate with light, one after another, heaven and earth, thus giving to the truth testimony as immutable as the idea of Him who, in the beginning, created the heaven and earth.

What do you think of the corn of wheat that must fall into the ground and die, of the sower, of the mustard seed, of the tares of the field, of the prodigal son?

It would seem as if this language, so simple, so transparent, which reaches the mind as light reaches the eyes, must be intelligible to all. Still we must have eyes to see even the sun, and we must have a spiritual sense to understand a spiritual revelation. The Saviour's words

are always cloudless, so clear, as to render inexcusable those who are not convinced by them. But when it is a question of its eternal interests, the soul of man, possessing the redoubtable prerogative of blinding itself, can only, as has been said, be convinced by being vanquished.*

Hence the cardinal, the absolute importance that the Saviour attaches to spiritual docility. It is in His eyes to so great an extent the necessary condition for the comprehension of the things that belong to salvation, that He does not hesitate in many of His discourses to make it the condition, *par excellence*, of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It is the man who heareth His words and doeth them, whose house is built upon a rock. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."† "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be

* *Vaincue, convaincue.*

† Matt. vii. 21.

of God.”* Heavenly things are revealed unto babes, hidden from the wise and prudent.

Publicans and sinners go into the kingdom of God before the Pharisees. Not, indeed, that there is respect of persons with God, in favour of ignorance and degradation; but the minds of the little ones, the sinners, in opposition to the others, are open to the truth, and they will allow it without hindrance to bring forth the blessed fruits of repentance and amendment.

The teaching of Jesus Christ, such as I have depicted it, in a manner far too summary and yet at too great a length, does not, as you perceive, in its external form much resemble the teachings of human doctors. Indeed, whether we speak of His public teaching, of His more direct influence upon individuals or upon His disciples, it is less teaching properly so called, than an education to which He submits them, a discipline under which He places them, in order to lead

* John vii. 17.

them by the paths of repentance and conversion, to that peace, to that joy, to that righteousness, in which, according to St. Paul, the kingdom of heaven consists.

Here, then, is our pattern. We shall never speak like the Saviour. But let us take heed that our efforts tend to approach the example which He has left us, and not to widen our distance from it. This example clearly teaches us, that we are called upon to evangelise souls rather than to indoctrinate them, and that it is far less our task to increase the number of the orthodox than the number of the converted.

In speaking thus, it may almost seem as if I were favouring that school now so much in vogue, which, condemning all precise assertion and settled formula, makes the strange pretension of having the sovereign example of the Master on its side, in contrast to the bad example of His disciples. "Let us," they say, "leave alone the disputed systems of human wisdom; let us leave alone even the laborious deductions

of St. Paul; and let us return to those living words, so nicely graduated, so practical, and which, because there is no dogma expressed in them, shall not pass away."

I confess I am not sorry, in approaching the ground-work of the teaching of Jesus Christ, to find an opportunity of unmasking the dangerous sophism, which may be speciously presented under the guise of a real and important truth. When the undogmatic character of the teaching of Jesus Christ is insisted on, what are we to understand by it? If it means that He did not express in formulæ a complete and coherent system of doctrine, nothing is more true. To do that, He must have written a book, and so far as I know, He did not write one. He did what was much better. Being Himself the truth, He simply put Himself in contact with souls, to enlighten and save them according to the infinite variety of their needs.

But if it means that the Master's words do not contain an implicit and explicit, that is to

say, most dogmatic answer to all the great questions that oppress the soul of man in the field of religious thought, if it means that He did not settle the basis and trace the main lines of a definite doctrine—the only doctrine which, proceeding from Him, deserves the name of evangelic—then I do not know of any pretension more manifestly erroneous.

Let us take as examples, two or three of the questions of which I have just spoken; let us select them from among those of the gravest character, and therefore the most passionately agitated; and let us see whether it is true that the Master has left no solution of them.

The question of sin for instance. The point is, whether man, in the condition in which we see him, answers to the ideal of his Creator? whether God made him such as he is? whether the evil which is in him and which stains his life, may not be considered a natural imperfection, which ought to disappear in the course of life, like an innocent shadow destined to be gradually effaced by the

dawn of righteousness, as night before the day? or whether we must conclude that there has been a fall, a revolt, and a catastrophe, the shipwreck of man's soul in the darkness of perdition, entailing consequences of infinite misery. Do you pretend that Jesus Christ had no categoric answer to this question? To what purpose, then, was His whole life consecrated? "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* Do you hear this? What does He make the condition of entrance into what He calls the kingdom of heaven? "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again," (mark well the expression, "born again") "he cannot see the kingdom of God."† Who, then, was it who spoke in such fearful terms of "outer darkness," of "gnashing of teeth," of "the fire that is not quenched," of "the worm that dieth not," of "eternal punishment?"

Suppress this most clear and trenchant doctrine in the teaching of Jesus Christ, try to replace it

* Luke xix. 10.

† John iii, 3

by vague notions of your own, replace, for example, the words perdition and new birth, by imperfection and progress—you will have utterly turned upside down the edifice of His teaching.

The question of pardon. The point is, whether the goodness of God, His tender and paternal character, is not sufficient, whether the whole Gospel is not contained in these words: “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee?” whether it is really necessary to encumber it with all this apparatus of a mediation, a sacrifice, of a Saviour “who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification?”*

Will you venture to say that on this point Jesus Christ had no doctrine; that is to say, a categorical assertion? What did He mean, then, when, on His entrance on His ministry, He laid so much stress on recalling the prophecies announcing the coming of a Redeemer, to show the accomplishment of them in His person?

What did He mean, then, by demonstrating

* Romans iv. 25.

so many times and by so many methods, both before and after the event, that "it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day?"* What did He mean by presenting Himself as the object of the faith which justifies and regenerates the sinner? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."† What did He mean by instituting the supper on the eve of His sacrifice, and by afterwards giving it as a mission to His disciples, to testify to the world of His death and resurrection? Suppress the clear and decisive doctrine in the teaching of the Son of Man on this point, and for the second time you will have turned the edifice upside down, you will have reduced it to ashes.

The question of the nature of Jesus Christ Himself. We want to know whether He who came to seek and to save us is a more or less

* Luke xxiv. 46.

† John iii 14, 15.

fabulous person; a man who is still not a man, a divine Being without divinity; a sage of an exceptional character; a demi-god, who came from the ranks of celestial creation, to inhabit our earth for a time; or whether by a mystery which I do not undertake to explain, but which I adore, He is Emmanuel, God with us, the eternal Word who made Himself man, truly man, for our salvation. Will you venture to say that Jesus Christ has no doctrine—that is, a categorical assertion on this point? You will not say that Jesus Christ was not a man, for then we should have to ask you whether you are a man yourself. Have you not seen, have you not touched, have you not heard Him? Jesus Christ is a man. But what did this man like myself, my brother, say of Himself? For every man in his inward language says something of himself; carries about with him, true or false, the consciousness of what he is. One says: “I am of noble birth.” Another: “I am one of the people.” There have been some who have said to themselves from childhood: “I am an

emperor.” What, I ask, did He say? It is purely a question of fact. What did He say when He called all men upon earth, created after the image of God, to come to Him, as the inexhaustible source of all refreshment, of all light, of all strength, of all peace, of all life? What does He say when He does not fear to attribute to Himself the power of judging all things, of pardoning sins, of raising the dead, of founding the kingdom of heaven? What did He mean when He provoked, without repressing, that exclamation of a scandalised crowd: “Thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”* Or when He allows a disciple to fall at His feet, with the exclamation: “My Lord and my God.”† Or again, when He uttered these unheard-of words: “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”‡ “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”|| What does He say within Himself, if it is not, “I am God?” Exclaim if you will, and say, with

* John x. 33.

† John xx. 28.

‡ John viii. 19.

|| John xiv. 9.

the Jews, that He blasphemes; but, at any rate, you cannot refuse to receive the evidence, and must agree that to take away from the teaching of Jesus Christ this primal assertion, will be for the third time radically to change its nature.

One question more. Let us see, what shall it be? The authority of Scripture? Whether the living Word bore testimony to the written Word? This is too obvious, we will take another. Let us take justification. The question is, whether man is justified by works, or whether he has need before God of that faith, the roots of which are plunged into repentance, and which bears fruit by regeneration. Do you pretend that Jesus Christ has no doctrine on this question—that is to say, as plain an affirmation as you can desire? Who, then, spoke with more disheartening irony of the presumption of those who flatter themselves that they are righteous because they are so in their own eyes, or those of others? Who was it who represented the work of salvation as something so great, so fundamental, that He formally declared

it impossible with man, and possible with God alone? Who said: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."* "I am the vine, ye are the branches, abide in me, for without me ye can do nothing."†

Read once more the conversation with Nicodemus, and find me a more authoritative exposition of salvation by faith, and of the theory of regeneration. Although a large part of the Saviour's teaching has less reference to the salvation of the individual than to the constitution of the kingdom of heaven, the plan of which He traces in the Sermon on the Mount, whose essential features He portrays in a vast number of parables, whose foundations He secures in His last conversations with His disciples, yet try to take away from it the conditions of salvation, such as on so many occasions He defines them to be—the twofold conditions of faith in Christ, and Christ crucified, and of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and see what remains.

* John vi. 29.

† John xv. 5.

No. If doctrine—that is to say, dogmatic assertion—is not seen at first sight in Christ's teaching, a moment's attention will suffice to show that it is pervaded by it, and that its decisiveness and firmness constitute its majesty and strength. Like the skeleton in the human frame, it does not appear outwardly, yet it is always there to sustain all the rest. Jesus does not propose problems for the intellect; all problems being solved for Him, and by Himself. But doctrine—if I may use the word again—doctrine is the very basis of His teaching. And it is not enough, to say that it is the basis. We must say that it is the soul, the life, the cause of its existence, its existence itself. As a sovereign master, as king of souls as of everything else, His mode of asserting His claims is simply to appear. And His words being but one form of His manifestation, it is in them, no doubt, but not in them alone, that I contemplate His teaching; it shines resplendent before my eyes in His person altogether, in His entire work. He proclaims the truth that man is a lost sinner

by coming to seek and to save him. He proclaims that He possesses divinity by becoming incarnate to accomplish a perfect work of reconciliation. That a sacrifice was needed for the expiation of sin, He proclaims by Himself consummating this sacrifice upon the Cross, after having announced, and in some sort, instituted it beforehand. That man can only be saved freely by means of faith, is a truth, henceforth the hope of the world, which He establishes and proclaims by presenting to the world the object of this faith, which is to give it life—Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Our work is doubtless very different from that of Jesus Christ. We are not the Saviour, but simply disciples called upon to bear witness to Him. But on this point His example certainly does not furnish us with a lesson of indifference as to doctrine, but with plain and precise instructions. On the contrary, it is doctrine transformed into conviction which alone confers on us the right to speak. Without it there would be no dignity, I had almost said no sincerity, in the

ministry of the Gospel. May our yea be yea, and our nay, nay. We cannot give too much care to the building up and confirmation of our convictions by the labours of the study, by prayer and meditation. But after all, let us learn from Jesus Christ that doctrine is less what a preacher says to others, than what he says to himself, and let us take care that our convictions do not become simply the livery of our words, when they ought to be their soul, their life, the essence of their existence. What is the work in question? To proclaim the doctrine of original sin? To prove the divinity of Jesus Christ? To spread sound views upon expiation? By no means; you may get all that when you want it with very little pains, and to very little profit. The work is to awaken men's consciences, to bring souls captive to the obedience of Christ. It is to persuade poor sinners, desperately lost, to accept an un-hoped-for and indispensable substitution. This is the work in hand. This it is which alone will rejoice the angels in heaven. This alone it is

which for eighteen centuries upon earth has been called evangelisation.

If we inquire what was the general impression produced by the words of Jesus Christ, there is one trait in them which in spite of, and perhaps because of the simplicity of His exterior, was equally striking to crowds and individuals. This was the authority with which He spoke. They compared Him to the teachers of His day, and exclaimed with a mixture of surprise and admiration: "Never man spake like this man." In human affairs, skill in the use of language may suffice; but in proportion as the subjects of which we treat are lofty, we require more simple methods of persuasion, more impressive and lofty; when we speak of salvation and of heaven, there is but one method of persuasion to be desired, that which Jesus Christ possessed in so great a degree. Who will teach us to speak as He did with authority? I should like to investigate in what this characteristic impression which the Saviour's words made on His

auditors consisted, so far as it is applicable to ourselves.

The authority of the words of Jesus Christ resulted, if I mistake not, from their incomparable accent of truth. I do not mean by this that He always spoke the truth ; this would be an almost inappropriate eulogy, for with Him sincerity reached the point of perfection. But without falsehood, and without intentionally altering the expression of their ideas, it is very rare for human orators to preserve what I will call the exact equilibrium of truth. Thus, it must be allowed that the great emotion caused by public speaking implies a sort of excitement, a mental rapture, causing the speaker to be for the time, as it were, raised above himself. This is our strength, but it is also our weakness. Jesus was never raised above Himself. Hence this calm strength, superior to all eloquence, this perfect equanimity, this august serenity, this profound simplicity, which inspires confidence, and which always gives a definite emphasis to His words.

Again, possessing the reality as well as the semblance of truth, He never had to search for truth, but simply to produce it. One might say that His words do but illumine outward things by the internal light which He bears within Himself, and which is, indeed, as St. John says, the true light. Look carefully, and see if from the simplest things to the most inscrutable mysteries, He did not without effort throw upon them the exact measure of light that they require. If, for instance, there is a dark impenetrable place like man's conscience, He pierces it, searches it, brings its most hidden secrets to the light of day, so that we have but two courses to take, either to fall at His feet or to turn away from Him. Recall the scene of the woman taken in adultery. Since the law of God is perfect in itself, He neither adds anything to it, nor takes anything away ; but with the eye of a Master He invariably looks at the spirit of it, that it may shine forth before the eyes of the sinner who thought himself secure because he had observed

the letter. If in the most distant recesses of heaven there is an inaccessible object, the face of the unknown God which no man can see and live, with a few words: "Our Father which art in heaven;" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," He annihilates the distance, He withdraws the veil, He opens our eyes, and we are constrained to exclaim: "Behold, He is here!" It is the same with everything. When a soul listens to Him, and becomes attentive to His voice, the sun rises for it in the invisible world. How can it but be subjugated? Jesus speaks with authority because He naturally speaks the very language of evidence itself.

Let us remember this, and ourselves possessing Him who calls Himself the truth, let us not forget that our mission is not to argue but to enlighten. Let us leave those who trust to their own wisdom, and who build upon philosophic doubt, laboriously to establish their pretensions. Firmly seated on the Rock of Ages, wise with the wisdom of God, we have something better to do.

When the shadows are thickening around us on every side—shadows of sin, shadows of self-righteousness, shadows of science falsely so called, shadows from within and shadows from without, do not let us waste our time in trying to create light, as if it had not been given to us. It is for us to receive it, and humbly and faithfully to spread it. It is for us to place ourselves simply as mirrors beneath the heavenly rays, to reflect them if possible in all their transparence and purity.

In order that we may the better serve the truth, we cannot strive enough to become more and more true. But, after all, let us acknowledge that Jesus Christ offered to souls by a sincere soul, is the simple secret of indisputable authority.

The authority of the Saviour's teaching resulted doubtless, in the second place, from the perfect holiness of His person and life. A man's teaching is, or ought to be, of the same value as the man himself. And it is not surprising that the words of Jesus Christ had such infinite weight

with His hearers, when we consider the infinite value of Him who uttered them. Never the least incongruity between what He is and what He does, nor between what He does and what He says. Everything about Him is so consistent and so entirely corresponds, that we may say that we hear perfection expressed by perfection lived. There are words so simple as to be almost trite, which on His lips are sublime in their aptitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* The first moralist might have discovered that; but does it not startle us to think of the lips which could have ventured to pronounce them for the first time? On the other hand, His most extraordinary precepts cease to be extraordinary, and fall into the region of the natural, because they naturally find their illustration in Himself. From whose mouth should we accept, as from His, these precepts which He Himself deprived of their unheard-of character? "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that

* Matt. v. 8.

hate you, pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

Even if it seems like a truism, so self-evident it is, we cannot too often repeat it, beginning by repeating it to ourselves: the true authority of our words is that which comes from character, and in religious matters especially from holiness of character. We hear that formerly the garb, the title, the office of a minister was respected; now, nothing external commands respect, we want solidity and truth. The more corrupt the world becomes, the more keen is it in detecting the inconsistencies of those who aspire to reform it. It has too much interest in finding us at fault not to watch us with lynx-like eyes. If it can possibly accuse us of luxury, sensuality, indolence, pride, or want of amiability; if it can but detect anything of adulteration in our tones, our atti-

* Matt. v. 44, 45, 48.

tudes, our language, an undefinable something which results from contact with every day matters, it is sure to be laid to our charge. The most brilliant preaching does but add to the scandal. If, then, we have it at heart to raise the moral level of contemporary society by preaching, let us remember that there is no preaching of the Gospel like that of a Gospel life. The reform that we have the holy ambition to bring about, imposes on us the holy ambition always to begin with ourselves.

It will only be said of us, as it was said of Jesus Christ: "Never man spake like this man," but in exact proportion as it can be said of us: "Never man lived like this man."

If the holiness of Jesus Christ had only consisted in an abstract moral superiority, it would only have conferred on Him an absolute authority without real result. That the same holiness which, according to an apostle, made Him separate from sinners and higher than the heavens, transformed into charity caused Him to descend into

the lowest parts of the earth to mingle with the worst of sinners, was what gave such an ascendancy to His person, and especially to His teaching. It is a wonderful thing when we think of it, that in a world so given to laxity and mistrust, no one should have possessed the secret of inspiring confidence in the wretched and in raising the degraded, like the Holy One and the Just. Ancient fable tells us of a divine minstrel, who attracted and charmed by the tones of his lyre the most ferocious denizens of the forests and the deserts. When the Gospels represent to us the Lamb of God, surrounded by publicans and sinners, who everywhere quitted their haunts at His approach to follow His steps; who grouped themselves around His feet wherever He tarried; and, subjugated by His words full of grace and truth, preceded the Scribes and Pharisees into the kingdom of God, does not the Gospel present to us a prodigy of moral authority which leaves the poetic legends of Greece far behind? All true success in preaching the Gospel must spring from

the same source as this prodigy; and the source from which it springs, is charity.

The worst of men (and woe to them who do not feel themselves to be the worst) are not merely wicked; they are distrustful, suspicious, always ready to become savage. Present to them the image of holiness, and they feel at once that they are in the presence of a master, the sight of whom disturbs them. They are seized with fear, and feel a mental irritation. But this austere and formidable image of holiness, by a metamorphosis as natural as it is unexpected, transforms itself into the image of charity, who understands and makes herself understood, who blesses us, and pardons and devotes herself; and you will first see surprise succeed to fear, peace to irritation, curiosity to stubbornness; perhaps, at length, you may see life take the place of death, and the glorious liberty of the children of God succeed to the bondage of Satan. If we have been vanquished ourselves, we ought to know how to vanquish others, and that it is only by charity

that they can be vanquished. Not indeed by our own charity. We did not accomplish the sacrifice of redemption, and it is not our name that is given unto men whereby they may be saved. But the charity of Christ—and this again is one of the marvels connected with it—must always be preceded, accompanied, and recommended by the charity of His disciples. Charity delights in employing us, doubtless, to do us good, in doing good to others. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.”*

I will conclude by applying this last reflection to the subject which has occupied us this evening. Called to carry on in the world the work of Jesus Christ, let us always take heed that we walk in His steps. If His is the only name given unto men whereby they may be saved, He no less demands that we shall partake of the travail of His soul. And it constitutes our nobility and glory, as Christians, to be able to work not only

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

for Him, but with Him, and in Him. Let us not deceive ourselves. What is wanted in this generation is not so much new institutions, nor more men of genius, nor fresh miracles; it is above everything else a fresh manifestation of the Spirit of Christ in our words as well as in our works, in private life and in public, in our individual as well as our collective activity. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."* Now the Spirit of Christ is not the monopoly of pastors. It is the soul of the Church to transform into the image of Christ, the soul and the life of every one of its members.

* John xv. 5.



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